NATION

No Aadhaar for those aged above 18 in Assam

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Nestlé India denies Maggi infestation claims

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SPORTS

US open its home World Cup with dynamic 4-1 win victory over

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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K'taka farmers call for protest against GBIT project

RAMANAGARA, 13 JUNE

Strongly opposing the Karnataka government's issuance of a final notification to acquire nearly 500 acres for the proposed GBIT near Bidadi in Bengaluru South district, farmers and villagers have called for a large-scale protest on 22 June. The protest will be held by local villagers, farmers, and farmers' organisations, including Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, to express strong opposition to land acquisition for the Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township project. A meeting was held here on Saturday, attended by farmer leaders and organisations, where they decided to oppose the government and support the farmers and villagers resisting the project. —*PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 2

No shortage of LPG, oil in India: Puri

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday said there was no shortage of energy in the country and that supplies of crude oil, LPG and natural gas remained comfortable despite global uncertainty triggered by the Iran conflict.

India has fuel reserves for over 60 days and LPG stocks for 75-80 days, he said. Puri said petrol prices in India fell 3.1 per cent between May 2022 and May 2026, even as rates rose sharply in countries including Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the US. He attributed the decline to repeated cuts in central excise duty by the Modi government. He also said India had lodged a strong protest with the US over the killing of three Indian seafarers. —*PTI*

EAM raises Indian mariners' killing in Hormuz with Rubio

Washington warns blockade violations 'will not be tolerated'

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday raised with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio the killing of three Indian mariners in a US military strike on a merchant vessel in the Gulf of Oman, describing such "lethal" actions against commercial shipping as unjustified.

Hours after the call, the US State Department said Rubio stressed that all commercial vessels must comply with orders from US forces seeking to uphold peace and security in the Strait of Hormuz.

"He underscored that violations of the US blockade and the illicit transport of Iranian oil will not be tolerated," State Department spokesperson Tommy Pigott said.

The US has been enforcing a blockade of Iranian ports after Tehran effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, a vital route that carries nearly 20 per cent of global oil and gas traffic.

India on Friday summoned US Charge d'Affaires Jason Meeks and lodged a strong protest over the continuing attacks by US naval forces on commercial vessels carrying Indian mariners in the Gulf of Oman. The diplomat had also been summoned earlier this week.

Three merchant ships with Indian crew came under attack off the Oman coast. The Palau-flagged oil tanker Marivex, carrying 24 Indians, was disabled by US forces on 8 June, though all crew members were rescued safely. On 10 June, another Palau-flagged tanker, Settebello, was struck, killing three of the 24 Indian sailors on board. A third vessel, the Guinea-Bissau-flagged Jalveer, with 20 Indians, was attacked on Thursday. The US Central Command said the vessels were targeted for allegedly attempting to violate the blockade of Iranian ports.

EAM S Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio —PTI

- On 10 June, another Palau-flagged tanker, Settebello, was struck, killing three of the 24 Indian sailors on board.

TRUMP SAYS IRAN BOMBED INDIAN SAILORS

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump accused Iran of carrying out drone attacks on Indian ships leaving the Strait of Hormuz, calling the alleged action "totally unacceptable". Iran rejected the charge, with its embassy in New Delhi calling the allegation "baseless" and accusing Washington of trying to divert attention from attacks by US forces on Indian-crewed vessels. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

Trump to hold talks with Modi at G7 summit

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump are set to hold a bilateral meeting in France, on the sidelines of the G7 Summit, according to a senior US administration official. This will be the first time they interact in person since PM Modi's visit to the US in February 2025 after Trump's inauguration as President. The meeting comes when India and the US are negotiating a bilateral trade deal and seeking to partner across multiple sectors – strategic, economic and technological. The two could discuss the progress of the deal, a priority for both governments, as well as the partnerships. The official added that Trump could also meet the leaders of France and Egypt. The G7 Summit is being held in Evian on 16 June and 17 June.

Security personnel stand near damaged remains of a transport aircraft of IAF that crashed while landing, in Jorhat district, Assam on Saturday —*PTI*

5 dead as IAF plane crashes in Assam, co-pilot survives

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Five IAF personnel, including two officers, were killed when their Russian-origin Antonov An-32 transport aircraft crashed while landing at Jorhat in Assam on Saturday.

The co-pilot of the aircraft was injured and is undergoing treatment at a military hospital in Jorhat, sources said. Six people were on the plane.

The aircraft met with the accident during a routine sortie at approximately 10 AM, the IAF said.

The dead are Squadron Leader Prashant Singh, Flight Lieutenant Shubham Kumar, Sergeant Jitendra Sharma, Agniveervayu Khemaram Kumawat and Agniveervayu Danish Alam.

A court of inquiry has been constituted to find the cause of the accident. It is learnt that the aircraft was set to fly to Chabua military base from Jorhat IAF station but requested a landing shortly after taking off.

The sources said the aircraft lost control upon touchdown and skidded off the runway. It hurtled across the parallel taxiway, snapping into two and got engulfed in flames.

The An-32 is a Soviet-designed twin-engine turboprop transport aircraft.

The aircraft have served the IAF as a reliable workhorse for decades ferrying personnel and air-dropping vital supplies into some of the world's most demanding terrain.

The IAF currently operates around 90 AN-32s.The fleet has undergone multiple upgrades to extend operational life.

The IAF is now looking at replacing the ageing fleet of AN-32 as well as IL-76.

In 2022, the IAF issued a Request for Information (RFI) to purchase medium transport aircraft (MTA) to replace its aging AN-32 and IL-76 planes. —*PTI*

Byre Gowda seeks clarity before taking charge of B'luru portfolio

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

Senior Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, who has delayed taking charge of his Greater Bengaluru Development portfolio citing 'incomplete' allocation of key city-related departments, on Saturday said he has sought clarity regarding his responsibilities and is waiting for Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's decision.

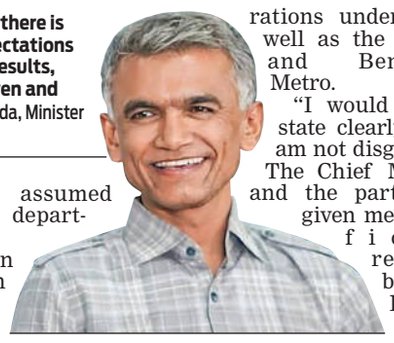
He said absolute clarity regarding responsibilities is essential to effectively discharge duties.

He declined to comment on a specific question about whether he will not assume charge as Greater Bengaluru Development Minister until the confusion is cleared.

Gowda was sworn in as minister on 3 June.

Gowda, who was given the Greater Bengaluru Development portfolio, is unhappy that the Chief Minister retained direct control over the city's two influential planning agencies, the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) and the Bengaluru Metropolitan Region Development Authority (BMRDA), and has therefore not assumed charge of the department.

> **Because whenever I take up any responsibility, there is accountability in delivering results for the expectations placed by the people and the party. To deliver results, there should be clarity on the responsibility given and what has been shared**
> -Krishna Byre Gowda, Minister



He has been entrusted with the GBA and five city corporations under it, as well as the BWSSB and Bengaluru Metro.

"I would like to state clearly that I am not disgruntled. The Chief Minister and the party have given me the difficult responsibility of looking after Bengaluru development. This is a difficult challenge. I don't see it as a power, because this is a big responsibility amid huge expectations from the people of Bengaluru, as well as from the CM and the party," Gowda said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said there will be expectations from the public and the party for a pro-people reform in Bengaluru. So there should be clarity about the responsibility, he said. — *PTI*

Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth appointed Army Chief

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth will be the next Chief of the Army Staff succeeding incumbent Gen Upendra Dwivedi, the defence ministry announced on Saturday.

Lt Gen Seth, widely known for his strategic planning and contributions towards modernisation of the Army, is currently serving as Vice Chief.

He will assume charge on 30 June when Gen Dwivedi retires.

In appointing Lt Gen Seth, the government followed the seniority principle.

Lt General Dhiraj Seth is set to take charge as next Chief of the Army Staff —*PTI*

"The government appointed Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth as the next Chief of the Army Staff with effect from the afternoon of 30 June," the ministry said.

The officer is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, and was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in December 1986.

Over a distinguished military career spanning nearly four decades, he has had extensive experience across the operational, strategic, capability development and institutional domains.

Widely recognised for his contributions to modernisation, the officer has held pivotal appointments in the strategic planning and capability development verticals at Army headquarters.

The officer commanded an armoured regiment in the desert sector, an armoured brigade in the western theatre, and a counter-insurgency force in J&K.

As Lt General, he commanded the Sudarshan Chakra Corps, one of the Army's strike formations. — *PTI*

M'rashtra coach rapes teen for 3yrs, films abuse

MUMBAI, 13 JUNE

Police have detained a football coach in Maharashtra after a 17-year-old girl accused him of repeatedly raping her over three years, under the guise of mentoring her for a career in sport. The accused, Abhijit Mandal, aged 36, a resident of Vasai, operates a private football training centre in the area.

According to police, the victim approached Mandal for training in 2023. He allegedly gained her trust

before repeatedly sexually assaulting her over the subsequent three years. It is also alleged that he recorded videos and photographs of the assaults and later used them to threaten her when she began to distance herself from him.

Unable to endure the ordeal any longer, the girl approached police with her family and lodged a formal complaint, which led to Mandal's arrest. He has been booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, with charges including rape, sexual assault, and criminal intimidation.

Further investigation is ongoing as authorities work to establish the full extent of the allegations. —*Salar News*

TWO DIE AFTER LUXURY CAR CRASHES INTO B'LURU BRIDGE

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

A 25-year-old woman and her friend died after the luxury car they were travelling in allegedly crashed into the side wall of a bridge on the outskirts of Bengaluru in the early hours of Saturday, police said.

The deceased were identified as Sajia, an employee of a private company in Bengaluru, and Rizwan, a car dealer, they said.

The accident occurred on the Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway near Hoskote while they were returning to Bengaluru after going out for a late-night drive and a meal, police said.

According to police, when the vehicle reached the Dodda Hulluru bridge, Rizwan, who was driving the car, allegedly at a high speed,

lost control of it and crashed into the concrete wall on the side of the bridge.

The impact of the crash badly damaged the front portion of the car.

Sajia suffered severe injuries and died inside the vehicle, a senior police officer said.

Police initially believed Rizwan had fled the scene after the accident, but later found that he had been thrown out of the car due to the impact and fell from the bridge into the water body below and died. —*PTI*

'BARGED IN TO THE HOUSE'

Cops raid Abhishek's home at 2am; Didi rushes over

KOLKATA, 13 JUNE

In a predawn operation that is certain to sharpen political faultlines in West Bengal, police personnel accompanied by central forces raided TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee's residence in Kolkata for several hours on Saturday while looking for his close aide in connection with an alleged financial fraud case.

Former chief minister Mamata Banerjee rushed to the residence and remained there until the operation concluded. The area remained heavily guarded throughout the search.

A team from Paschim Medinipur's Salboni Police Station, assisted by Kolkata Police, arrived at Banerjee's Kalighat residence around 2 am. Police sources said the search was aimed at tracing Banerjee's personal assistant, Sumit Roy, who is wanted in an ongoing investigation into a financial fraud case registered at Salboni Police Station.

According to the sources, Roy's mobile phone was last traced to Banerjee's residence, prompting investigators to launch the raid.

Officials said the police repeatedly knocked on the doors of the house but received no response and had to wait outside for nearly four hours. The TMC alleged that the police team broke open a lock to enter the premises. "They broke the lock and searched the entire house," Abhishek Banerjee told reporters after the team left at around 7.30am, having searched the premises for nearly 90 minutes. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

KALYAN SOFTENS STANCE, SAYS ABHISHEK 'LIKE MY SON'

Just two days after openly criticising Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee struck a conciliatory note on Saturday, calling him "like my son" and saying it was a father's duty to forgive his mistakes. His remarks came amid a deepening crisis in the party, with dissident MPs and MLAs reportedly backing a breakaway faction. Earlier this week, Kalyan had challenged Abhishek's growing influence, accusing him of arrogance and disrespecting senior leaders, and said Mamata Banerjee would have to choose between them. Abhishek responded mildly, saying Kalyan had every right to express his views.

People gather outside the residence of TMC's Abhishek Banerjee in Kalighat, Kolkata —*PTI*

Two nursing students die in Mysuru accident

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

Two nursing students were killed after the motorcycle they were riding allegedly crashed into a divider on Mysuru road near here early on Saturday, police said. The deceased were identified as Gauri Shankar, 22, a native of Ernakulam, and Atul CB, 22, from Kannur in Keralam, they said. The accident occurred near RR Dental College around 2am when the two were returning from Mysuru to Kengeri. According to preliminary investigation, Gauri Shankar, who was riding the motorcycle, allegedly lost control due to overspeeding and hit the road divider. Neither of the two was wearing a helmet, and both sustained severe head injuries in the crash. Further investigation is underway. —*PTI*

— PTI

FM visits Mangaluru Port and Udupi temples

MANGALURU/UDUPI, 13 JUNE

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman visited the New Mangaluru Port, where she reviewed operations, infrastructure, and ongoing activities, emphasising the port's vital role in Karnataka's trade and coastal development. Her office stated, "She later interacted with trade bodies, MSMEs and industry representatives." She was accompanied by MP Brijesh Chowta, CBIC Chairman Vivek Chaturvedi, and CBIC member Yogendra Garg. Earlier, Sitharaman visited Udupi, offering prayers at Sri Krishna Math, meeting Sri Vedavardhana Tirtha Swamiji, and receiving his blessings. She also visited Shree Mahalakshmi Temple and Sri Hosa Marigudi Temple, engaging with temple authorities. Her visit aligns with BJP's organisational activities ahead of upcoming political events in the region. —*PTI*

Farmers to protest Bidadi township on 22 June

After govt issues notification, farmers say won't part with land

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

After the State government issued a notification to acquire 499 acres for the proposed Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township near Bidadi, farmers and villagers on Saturday called for a large-scale protest on 22 June.

The protest will be held by local villagers, farmers, and farmers' organisations, including Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, to express strong opposition to land acquisition.

The notification was issued for acquisition across three villages in Ramanagara and Harohalli taluks for the GBIT, which is among Chief Minister Shivakumar's ambitious projects—projected as India's "first AI-powered integrated township".

The project is expected to cover about 7,481 acres across nine villages in the region, sources said, adding that the notification issued on Thursday is likely to be the first in a series of land acquisition notifications to be issued in the days ahead.

"Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha has completely supported the fight that is going on for the land in Bidadi hobli. The government has now issued a notification for land acquisition in three villages; they are proceeding phase by phase," a farmer leader said.

The project aims to create India's 'first AI-powered integrated township' in Bidadi —*X @KUMARASWAMY4CM*

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, he said about 5,000 people were likely to take part in the protest.

"The farmers there have resolved that they will not give even an inch of their land at any cost," he said.

Alleging a "real estate" conspiracy behind the land acquisition, the farmer leader said the land would not be given at any cost.

"Our fight will not fail for any reason; it will be successful, because the government's move is anti-people and nothing has been done keeping farmers' in mind. If he (Shivakumar) is truly a farmer's son, he should not trouble farmers," he added.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka noted that farmers had been protesting for nearly 470 days, and alleged the Shivakumar was "running bulldozers" over fertile land to build a "real estate empire".

Ashoka said that once the BJP came to power in 2028, it would officially cancel the entire land acquisition process.

JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy vowed to fight the issue legally, and challenged Shivakumar to personally visit the affected villages and determine whether the landowners whose properties had been notified for acquisition under the proposed township project agreed with the government's move. —*PTI*

> **A government that cannot provide basic facilities in Bengaluru—what facilities will it provide to (Bidadi's) farmers?.. Will Bidadi also become waterlogged?**
>
> -HDK Kumaraswamy, JD(S) leader

> **DK Shivakumar, in your administration, CM does not mean "Chief Minister", it means "Commission Minister" or "Corruption Minister"**
>
> -R Ashoka, LoP in the Assembly

- Project to cover **7,481** acres across nine villages to build "AI township"
- Govt says **80%** of farmers consented to land acquisition, but farmers deny the claim.
- Farmers have been protesting for **460** days against the project.

A worker sprays insecticides in a vegetable field at Hariharadalli village, near Chikkamagaluru —*PTI*

LoP slams govt over 'fertiliser shortage'

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka slammed the State Congress government over an alleged shortage of fertilisers in the State.

The Agricultural Department has stated that at least 60 per cent of Karnataka's fertiliser is imported via the Strait of Hormuz, which has been effectively closed due to the US-Israel war on Iran. The department said fertiliser availability from April to September is 34 per cent lower than the demand.

This is compounded by the lack of Diammonium Phosphate (DAG) fertiliser, commonly used in cash crops like cotton. In Bidar, for example, the government advised farmers to snot to rely solely on DAP fertiliser and instead use alternative complex fertilisers.

However, Ashoka alleged that the problem ran deeper. He noted that there was no Agriculture Minister after government's Chief Minister change and Cabinet reshuffle. "The Congress government are engrossed only in the tussle over portfolio allocations," Ashoka stated on X.

"According to the official figures from the Agriculture Department, the State supposedly has 10.65 lakh metric tons of chemical fertilizer in stock," he added. But there was no fertiliser in dozens of districts, Ashoka claimed.

He alleged that farmer contact centres either had no stock of fertilisers, or farmers were made to wait in lines only to be given one bag per acre, he alleged.

"A government that spends thousands of crores on promoting guarantees doesn't even have the basic capacity to deliver fertilizer to farmers on time?" Ashoka added, asking when an agricultural minister would be appointed. —*Salar News*

Bi-RIDE invites tender for Soladevanahalli train maintenance

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

In a significant leap forward for the Bengaluru Suburban Transport Project, Bi-RIDE has officially invited bids for the construction of the Soladevanahalli train maintenance depot, officials said on Saturday.

This critical infrastructure component, estimated to be Rs 200.03 crores (excluding GST), will serve as the operational backbone for the City's expanding suburban railway services, they said. The deadline for bid submissions has been set for 12 August, 2026.

This follows the work order issued on 6 May for the procurement of 153 coaches from the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai. The new depot is being specifically facilitated to ensure the seamless upkeep, periodic maintenance, and reliable deployment of these upcoming rolling stocks.

Planned near the Chikkabanavara suburban station, the depot will oversee the operation and maintenance of trains exclusively for Corridor 2 and 4, it said.

"To seamlessly facilitate this massive undertaking, 26 acres of private land have already been successfully acquired by the administration," Bengaluru Integrated Rail Infrastructure Development Enterprise (Bi-RIDE) said in a statement.

WORK ON PRR PACAKGE 1 TO BEGIN

In another significant development, the government issued a letter of acceptance to the Shankaranarayana Constructions (SNC), meaning that work will commence soon on the long-stalled Peripheral Ring Road Package 1 (PRR-1), LK Atheeq, financial advisor to the CM and Chairman of the Bengaluru Business Corridor stated. Work is expected to commence for the 21kms connecting Madavara on Tumakuru Road to Ballari Road near BIEC.

—*Salar News with Agencies*

ANIMAL RIGHTS DAY

Animal Liberation Activists and volunteers demonstrate to mark the 16th National Animal Rights Day, at Freedom Park, in Bengaluru, on Saturday —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

CJP to protest NEET leak in City today

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

The newly formed Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) is set to hold a protest in Bengaluru on Sunday demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET leak issue as part of its nationwide stir.

The founder, Abhijeet Dipke, posted a video on X on Saturday, for "peaceful protests" at the City's Freedom Park from 4pm. He said that he would be attending.

"More than 1 crore students have been wronged by the system," he added.

Simultaneous protests have also been called for in Hyderabad.

The outfit had previously held massive protests in New Delhi.

Dipke has said that the party will begin an indefinite sit-in at Delhi's Jantar Mantar on 20 June if the demand for resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan is not met. —*Salar News*

BJP National General Secretary Radha Mohan Das Agrawal; ex Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai —*PTI*

Annamalai's exit personal decision: BJP Gen Secy

MANGALURU, 13 JUNE

BJP National General Secretary Radha Mohan Das Agrawal on Saturday described former Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai's decision to quit the party as a personal choice and said the BJP remained focused on long-term national objectives rather than short-term political considerations.

Speaking to reporters in Mangaluruon the sidelines of a meeting of the party functionaries, Agrawal said the BJP, as a national party, formulates its strategies keeping the country's future in mind and works on long-term plans.

NABIN TO DECIDE VIJAYENDRA'S FUTURE

Responding to questions on a possible change in the Karnataka BJP leadership, Agrawal said the final decision would be taken by the party's National President Nitin Nabin. BY Vijayendra, son of former chief minister BS Yediyurappa, currently hold the top post.

He said the Central leadership was fully aware of political developments in the State, as well as the performance and achievements of the incumbent Vijayendra.

DOOR OPEN FOR YATNAL?

Asked about the possible return of expelled senior leaders Basanagouda Patil Yatnal and KS Eshwarappa to the party, Agrawal said "the BJP does not intend to keep anyone away from the party permanently. Future decisions will be taken after assessing their conduct and activities". —*PTI*

CM reviews rain preparedness

BENGALURU, 13 JUNE

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Saturday chaired a review meeting at the Vidhana Soudha on various governance-related issues, including monsoon preparedness and law and order.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners, Chief Executive Officers and Superintendents of Police from districts across the State.

The meeting focused on maintaining law and order, strengthening preparedness ahead of the monsoon season and accelerating the implementation of administrative initiatives across districts.

"The meeting discussed the effective maintenance of law and order across the state, precautionary measures to be taken ahead of the monsoon season, and steps to further accelerate administrative work," CMO a statement from the read. —*ANI*

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar at a review meeting with officials from across the State, at Vidhana Soudha, on Saturday —*SALAR*

Mother kills two kids and attempts suicide near Mysuru

MYSURU, 13 JUNE

A woman allegedly murdered her two young daughters and then tried to end her own life at Javaregowda Koppal in Saligrama taluk on Friday night. Police identified the deceased girls as Dhruthi, aged three, and Disha, aged one and a half.

The mother, Priyanka, 26, is currently fighting for her life in a private hospital in Mysuru. Police suspect the motive may be linked to a domestic dispute.

Priyanka was married to Anilkumar of Javaregowdanakoppalu six years ago.

The police found the girls' necks entangled in jute thread, and both were declared dead at the scene. Priyanka was rushed to hospital. The bodies were handed over to Anilkumar's relatives after post-mortem at Krishnaraja Hospital in KR Nagar on Saturday.

Saligrama Police Inspector Shashikumar visited the spot. An investigation is ongoing, and police will establish the exact motive once Priyanka responds to their inquiries. —*Salar News*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

Tiger hurt in snare at Mullayanagiri, activist files plaint

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 13 JUNE

Social activist Dinesh Kallahalli has lodged a complaint with forest conservation authorities in Chikkamagaluru district, alleging that an injured tiger caught in a wire snare a is reportedly roaming in the foothills of Mullayanagiri. He claimed that the tiger was illegally trapped. The snare is reportedly still hanging around its waist, as the tiger has been wandering in pain for the past four to five days.

In his complaint, Kallahalli has demanded that authorities immediately register a forest offence case, initiate legal proceedings against those responsible, locate the injured tiger, and provide urgent veterinary treatment and rescue. He has also sought the identification and arrest of the individuals, organised poachers, or networks involved.

Further, he has demanded a departmental inquiry into any dereliction of duty or negligence on the part of concerned forest officials. The complaint also calls for a special investigation into illegal resorts, unauthorised road construction, snare hunting, and other anti-wildlife activities in the region.

Meanwhile, forest officials have been attempting to capture and rescue the tiger. Camera traps have been installed to monitor its movements. Forest authorities have advised plantation workers not to enter the estates for work until further notice and issued an alert to tourists and residents in the nearby villages. —*Salar News*

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AIRLINE BLAMES EXCESSIVE LUGGAGE

Blind cricketer alleges discrimination by Cathay at KIA

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

A dispute between a group of visually impaired travellers and Cathay Pacific Airways at Bengaluru airport has sparked allegations of discrimination, but the airline maintained that the passengers' failure to pay excess baggage fee in time led to denial of boarding.

The travelling group, which reached the Kempegowda International Airport on Thursday night, contained blind World Cup winning cricketer Lokesha, and musicians Ashoka, Nam Chang Buiing, Pranay and Dadasab. They were travelling to the USA on a three-month cultural concert tour under the Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled.

"Their tone and their sudden, aggressive shift in stance indicated that they believed visually impaired individuals could not navigate or stand up for themselves," Lokesha, a partially sighted cricketer who was instrumental in India's triumph in the 2017 T20 World Cup for the Blind, told PTI.

"Based on available records, the non-acceptance of the passengers was due to the non-completion of payment for applicable excess baggage charges within the required operational timeframe, and not to the passengers' disability," Cathay Pacific said in a statement.

GK Mahantesh, the Samarthanam Trust president, said the G-pay link provided by the airline accepted a maximum payment of Rs 1 lakh, but the excess fee levied by the aviation company amounted to Rs 1.12 lakh.

"We offered a credit card but they didn't accept it," he added.

Mahantesh said he will take the matter up to authorities concerned such as the Civil Aviation Ministry and national sports bodies.

"We'll go to consumer court and also take legal action against them," he said. —*PTI*

Cops broke open lock, barged inside: Abhishek

TMC terms search 'political vendetta'; BJP rejects charge and says no one was is above the law

KOLKATA, 13 JUNE

"You can ask the investigating agencies about the search, whether I have hidden anything inside?" Trinamool Congress national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee said on Saturday after police and central forces searched his Kolkata residence in connection with an alleged financial fraud case.

In another allegation directed at the authorities, Banerjee claimed, "They broke open the lock, entered the house and searched every room."

Asked whether his personal assistant Sumit Roy, whom police were looking for, was found at the premises, Banerjee said, "You should ask that question to the police who searched my house thoroughly. I am not the spokesperson of the police."

Sources in the investigating team said Roy, who remains untraceable, could not be located despite an extensive search and no seizures were made.

Police sources said the search is linked to the June 6 arrest of former TMC MLA and the party's ex-Paschim Medinipur district president, Sujoy Hazra, on charges of extortion and land fraud. Dramatic scenes were witnessed after Hazra's arrest in Kharagpur as locals hurled eggs at the police vehicle transporting him, alleging that he had taken money for government housing but failed to fulfil his promises.

TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee speaks to media after police personnel conducted a raid at his residence in Kolkata on Saturday —PTI

Investigators claimed to have evidence of financial transactions between Hazra and Roy connected to the alleged fraud.

Saturday's operation came at a politically sensitive time for Banerjee, who is facing scrutiny in multiple cases. The West Bengal CID questioned him two days ago in the alleged forged-signature case linked to the Assembly and summoned him again on June 14. The Calcutta High Court has directed him to cooperate while granting protection from coercive action for two weeks.

Banerjee has also been asked to appear before the CID on 16 June over alleged remarks made by him and before the Enforcement Directorate on June 15 in the primary school recruitment case. TMC termed the search "political vendetta", a charge rejected by the BJP, which said no one was above the law. —PTI

ED conducts raids on TMC MLA Madan

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has been carrying out raids since early Saturday at seven properties allegedly linked to Trinamool Congress (TMC) Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Madan Mitra, in West Bengal, officials said. The leader was also being questioned by the investigators. Officials claimed Mitra is "linked" to 125 illegal appointments for various posts to different municipalities, as bribes in the form of cash and gold through middlemen. Mitra represents the Kamarhati assembly seat in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district. —PTI

TMC MP Sudip meets BJP's Bhupender in Delhi

KOLKATA, 13 JUNE

A meeting between senior Trinamool Congress (TMC) Member of Parliament (MP) Sudip Bandyopadhyay and Union Minister Bhupender Yadav in New Delhi on Saturday sparked fresh political speculation amid turmoil within the party, raising questions on whether the veteran MP could join the dissident group seeking recognition as a separate parliamentary faction.

Bandyopadhyay, accompanied by rebel TMC MP Shatabdi Roy, reached the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader's Motilal Nehru Marg residence in the afternoon, where they held the meeting.

The development comes amid dissident TMC MPs stating they will meet Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday to seek recognition as the "real TMC", following the party's electoral drubbing in the 2026 West Bengal Assembly polls.

A Lok Sabha MP from the prestigious Kolkata Uttar seat, Bandyopadhyay, remains one of the most senior parliamentarians in the TMC and has long been regarded as a key bridge between the party leadership and Delhi's political establishment.

Any engagement between him and a senior BJP strategist is therefore likely to be closely scrutinised for signals regarding the future course of West Bengal politics, especially in terms of the political future of the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC in the state. — PTI

Siliguri trader files plaint against Abhishek

A trader in West Bengal's Siliguri on Saturday said he has lodged a police complaint against Trinamool Congress (TMC) Member of Parliament (MP) Abhishek Banerjee over allegedly making provocative remarks targeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah on 4 May during the recently concluded West Bengal Assembly polls. The complainant, Sanjay Kr Singhal, said the remarks were not in accordance with the law and questioned how an MP could make such statements. There was no immediate response from Banerjee or the TMC. —PTI

R'than MLA, municipal officer clash during meet

BHARATPUR, 13 JUNE

A heated exchange broke out between MLA Ritu Banawat and Bayana Municipal Council Executive Officer Anita Kumari at a review meeting of the civic body in Rajasthan's Bharatpur district, officials said on Saturday. The confrontation began when the independent MLA raised various civic and administrative issues during the meeting. The discussion soon escalated into a verbal spat between the two sides, they said. The dispute escalated after Kumari objected to Banawat's remarks about individuals who were allegedly interrupting the meeting. The executive officer reportedly asked the MLA why the individuals were asked to leave the meeting room and allegedly told her that they were like family to her. —PTI

TMC's Derek, NCP (SP)'s Sule bin Cong merger buzz

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Trinamool Congress Joint Secretary Derek O'Brien dismissed speculations about the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) merging with another party, terming such reports as "fake news." NCP (SP) working president Supriya Sule also said on Saturday that there was no proposal for a merger from the Congress or the NCP (SP).

His remarks come amid speculation about the party's future, which has been grappling with an internal crisis following its defeat in the West Bengal Assembly polls.

Rumours of a possible merger gathered pace after a series of meetings between senior leaders of the Trinamool Congress and the Congress in New Delhi this week.

TMC chief Mamata Banerjee met CPP chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday, a day after the INDIA meeting here.

While neither side disclosed details of the Mamata-Sonia meeting, sources said Mamata stressed the need for opposition unity.

A day later, TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

Both the Congress and the TMC have dismissed speculations about a merger.

Meanwhile in Nagpur, NCP (SP) working president Supriya Sule said on Saturday that there had been no proposal of merger from the Congress or the NCP (SP).

- Rumours of a possible merger gathered pace after a series of meetings between senior leaders of the Trinamool Congress and the Congress in New Delhi this week.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut had said earlier this week that the Congress's offshoots like the NCP led by Sharad Pawar and the TMC should merge with the Congress to face the BJP.

He appealed to NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar to take the initiative in this direction, saying everyone must come together to fight the BJP. — PTI

CPI(M) FUME AT RAGA'S JIBE

Rahul doesn't strengthen INDIA: Vijayan

KOZHIKODE, 13 JUNE

The Leader of the Opposition in the Kerala Assembly, Pinarayi Vijayan, on Saturday criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying his approach does not strengthen INDIA, and often ends up helping the BJP.

Responding to a question about Rahul Gandhi's reported remark at an INDIA meeting that he would not hug Vijayan due to their political rivalry in Kerala, the former CM said he was not concerned about who hugs whom.

"But we all saw the photograph of Rahul hugging Modi. My objection is not to hugging Modi. Rather, his remarks represent a particular political message. It reflects Rahul Gandhi's approach and how he views INDIA," Vijayan said.

He said the matter required detailed discussion and that he would not go into it at length now.

He said the INDIA alliance had reached a particular stage today. "It is not only us, but also

leaders like Akhilesh Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav, along with other major non-Congress parties, who raised objections during the meeting and spoke against the Congress stand," he said.

He added that people could see where the DMK stands now.

"The current situation has been created by the Congress approach, particularly by Rahul's approach. The reality is that this approach does not strengthen INDIA. As I have said before, it often ends up helping the BJP. Through such actions, Rahul is creating a situation where he effectively becomes a facilitator of the BJP," Vijayan said. —PTI

Rahul to kick off anti-paper leak campaign with student meet

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

The Congress announced the first phase of a nationwide campaign against the alleged paper leaks and examination irregularities, with Rahul Gandhi scheduled to address a series of student conventions, starting from Kota on 17 June.

The movement will seek to unite students beyond political affiliations and provide a platform for affected youth to share their experiences and demand accountability for "repeated examination failures and paper leak scandals," the party said on Saturday.

In a statement, AICC general Secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal said, "The Congress

will seek a comprehensive discussion in Parliament on the crisis confronting India's youth and advocate legislative measures to protect their interests."

He said Gandhi, who has emerged as the "most consistent and credible advocate" for India's students and youth, will conduct a series of student conventions starting with Kota (17 June), Allahabad (10 July), Patna (11 July) and Delhi (14 July), bringing together students, youth organisations, educators and all those affected by the examination scandals.

"The campaign will highlight the hardships faced by millions of young Indians whose futures are being repeatedly jeopardised by paper leaks, rising examination costs and the government's failure to ensure a fair education system," Venugopal said.

The party will reiterate Gandhi's call to mobilise students through extensive outreach by the NSUI, Youth Congress, PCCs, DCCs and local units across the country, he said. —PTI

UP GOVT FORMS SIT OVER RAM TEMPLE DONATION ROW

LUCKNOW, 13 JUNE

The Uttar Pradesh government has formed a three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe allegations regarding donations and financial management of the Ram temple trust in Ayodhya, officials said. The SIT was constituted on the direction of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath following a request from the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

The team includes Vijay Vishwas Pant, IAS; Kiran S, IPS; and Neel Ratan, Finance Department. The controversy arose earlier this month when Akhilesh Yadav claimed reports suggested crores of rupees from donations were missing, urging the court to take suo motu cognisance. The trust's general secretary, Champat Rai, said internal audits were ongoing, and no evidence had emerged so far. Trust member Mahant Dinendra Das expressed confidence and said any government inquiry would be acceptable. —PTI

Shah chairs meeting on panel to study demographic changes

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday chaired a meeting of Home Ministry officials to ensure facilitate the functioning of the high-level committee on demographic change, officials said.

The committee, headed by Justice Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar, will study demographic changes, especially in border areas.

It will also visit metropolitan areas and industrial towns to assess the changes, they said.

The first meeting of the committee has already been convened and the agenda has been formulated, an MHA spokesperson said.

"MHA will provide logisti- Amit Shah also directed the high-level committee on demographic change to study the shift in population structure in border districts, officials said.

Chairing the meeting of the committee, Shah also asked it to visit border areas, metro cities and industrial towns. —PTI

Andhra CM to visit Singapore to attract investments

AMARAVATI, 13 JUNE

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will visit Singapore from 15 to 16 June to attract investments and review collaborations. He will depart from Bengaluru at 11.35am on 14 June. During his stay, Naidu will meet the High Commissioner, participate in roundtables with venture capitalists, and attend a luncheon with UN-Habitat's Executive Director. He will hold discussions with Singapore's Senior Minister Low Yen Ling, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, and Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan. Naidu will also meet industry leaders, inaugurate the CBN@361 programme, attend the APAC Semiconductor Roundtable, and participate in the World Cities Summit. —PTI

Satheesan intervenes to speed up aid for child

T'PURAM, 13 JUNE

Keralam Chief Minister VD Satheesan intervened to resolve delays in financial aid to a 10-year-old girl from Palakkad, who last year lost her right hand due to alleged medical negligence. Following his intervention, the Women and Child Welfare Department assured all arrears would be cleared immediately, a statement from the Chief Minister's Office said. The department informed the CM that the girl was receiving aid under a central-funded sponsorship scheme, but funds were delayed due to non-receipt in the new financial year. Satheesan directed Minister Bindu Krishna to investigate the delay. The girl's hand was amputated after a fracture, and aid was promised with a prosthetic hand, with help from opposition leader Satheesan. —PTI

AMID GLOBAL TENSIONS

India tests multi-layer ballistic missile system

The multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) capability was successfully demonstrated during a series of tests carried out on 10 and 11 June —MINSTRY OF DEFENCE

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

India has successfully carried out flight-tests of key platforms this week to demonstrate its multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence System's capability to intercept long and medium-range missiles, joining a select group of countries having the capability.

The BMDs are capable of intercepting incoming long-range nuclear missiles and hostile aircraft including AWACS (airborne warning and control systems).

Three consecutive flight-tests were conducted on 10 and 11 June to demonstrate multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) against incoming missiles, according to the defence ministry.

The tests were conducted to check the capability to take down incoming ballistic missiles both inside and outside the earth's atmospheric limits.

- The BMDs are capable of intercepting incoming long-range nuclear missiles and hostile aircraft including AWACS (airborne warning and control systems).

The DRDO has successfully demonstrated multiple crucial technologies bolstering the nation's defence capabilities against different types of enemy threats, the ministry said on Saturday.

It said multi-layered BMD capability was successfully demonstrated through these flight-tests.

"The interceptors successfully engaged their targets. The systems were developed to address missile threats," it said. "These tests have put the country in the elite group of nations having BMD capability to engage intercontinental ballistic missiles," the ministry said.

The maiden flight-test of the Naval Anti-Ship Missile-Medium Range (NASM-MR) was also carried out successfully. Under the BMD programme, India has been developing capability to intercept hostile missiles both at endo-atmospheric and exo-atmospheric levels.

The endo-atmospheric missiles are the ones that operate within the earth's atmosphere that covers an altitude below 100 km. The exo-atmospheric missiles are capable of completing missions in the upper-most region of the earth's atmosphere. — PTI

STAND-UP COMEDIANS CROSSING LIMITS: SENA MLC TO MOVE MOTION IN HOUSE

MUMBAI, 13 JUNE

Days after comic Pranit More, during a comedy show in Gurugram, allegedly glorified coercion and non-consensual conduct towards a woman, Shiv Sena leader Manisha Kayande on Saturday said she will introduce a motion against such acts in the upcoming monsoon session of the state legislature.

Kayande alleged that stand-up comedians are crossing all limits under the pretext of freedom of expression and need to be taught a lesson. Her remarks come amid a controversy surrounding More, related to which a case has been registered in Mumbai for spreading "obscene and objectionable" content. More was recorded laughing at an audience member's statement that he had spent Rs 370 on a plate of chicken biryani during a date with a woman and not received any intimate gesture from her in return. Both the comedian and the audience member have apologised.

FEMALE MBBS STUDENT ON FORCED LEAVE OVER CADAVER REMARKS

Meanwhile, Mumbai's KEM Hospital and its attached medical college on Saturday placed undergraduate MBBS student Sejal Pawar on compulsory leave for 15 days after her remarks on male cadavers at the same show kicked up a row. Pawar has also been directed to cooperate fully with the institutional inquiry. Pawar had made allegedly derogatory comments regarding medical cadavers and deceased male bodies used for educational purposes, which authorities flagged as highly disrespectful and for which she faced enormous backlash. —PTI

M'rashtra considers 'Single Parent Child' category

MUMBAI, 13 JUNE

The Maharashtra government is contemplating a new "Single Parent Child" category on college admission forms to support children of single mothers pursuing higher and technical education. Higher and technical education Minister Chandrakant Patil announced a high-level committee will be formed to ensure effective implementation, concessions, and educational support for these students. The move aims to identify the actual number of such children in higher education, enabling better planning. An online meeting with 1,500 college principals will be held on 17 June to discuss registration procedures. A committee under the Women and Child Development Department has already been established to submit recommendations. —*PTI*

—ANI

Aavin denies discontinuing 'Green Magic' milk

CHENNAI, 13 JUNE

State-owned Aavin on Saturday clarified that its green-packaged milk brand had not been discontinued and that its distribution was continuing. There were reports that Aavin had reduced the supply of 'Green Magic' (with 4.5 per cent fat) milk due to low procurement, forcing consumers to buy milk from private companies, which is costlier. However, a press release from Aavin said the media reports claiming that 'Green Magic' had been discontinued were false. The Aavin website said a 225 ml packet of Green Magic is priced at Rs 11, while the 500 ml pack is available at Rs 22. The company clarified that all its milk varieties, including 'Green Magic', were being distributed normally and that no variety had been discontinued or subjected to any substantial supply cut —*PTI*

No Aadhaar for those aged above 18 in Assam

Move to prevent Bangladeshis from acquiring Aadhaar

GUWAHATI, 13 JUNE

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday that the Cabinet has decided that Aadhaar cards would not be issued to those above the age of 18 to ensure illegal immigrants don't acquire the document.

In exceptional cases, the district commissioner will have to send a proposal to the state government seeking permission for issuing the card, he said at a press conference here after a cabinet meeting.

The government will then decide whether the applicant is eligible for the card, the chief minister informed reporters.

Pointing out that Aadhaar card issuance has reached a saturation point in the state, Sarma said, "In some districts, it has crossed the 100 per cent mark, and we must ascertain who these people are who are taking the additional Aadhaar cards. The step is being taken to ensure that no illegal Bangladeshis get Aadhaar cards," he said.

Aadhaar cards will, however, continue to be issued to people from the tea garden community and the Scheduled Tribes, as many are yet to receive the cards.

"The ban will, however, be complete from 1 April 2027, and people from these communities above the age of 18 will also stop getting Aadhaar from that date," the chief minister said.

Aadhaar cards will continue to be issued to people from the tea garden community and STs, Assam CM Himanta Biswas Sarma said—*PTI*

- Pointing out that the issue of Aadhaar card has reached saturation point in the state, Sarma said, "In some districts, it has crossed the 100 per cent mark, and we must ascertain who are taking the additional Aadhaar cards. The step is being taken to ensure that illegal Bangladeshis do not acquire Aadhaar cards"

Aadhaar cards, however, will continue to be issued to those below the age of 18.

Sarma had earlier said the state government would be "very strict" in issuing Aadhaar cards, and it would not be easy to get the document in Assam. — *PTI*

NEW EDU POLICY

One Sanskrit section must in classes 6 and 9 of KVs

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan has made it mandatory for all its schools to maintain at least one Sanskrit section in classes 6 and 9 as per the third-language framework for the 2026-27 academic session.

In a circular issued on 29 May, the autonomous body under the Ministry of Education said all Kendriya Vidyalayas should have completed the process of taking options from students and parents for the third-language framework (R3).

It said the third language must be either Sanskrit or regional/state language from among the scheduled languages, different from R1 (Hindi) and R2 (English).

"Students can opt for either Sanskrit or the regional language. The requirement is only that there should be at least one Sanskrit section in every school to help the children of transferable employees," a senior official said.

The KVS also sought data on the students' R3 choices through the Samagam portal to re-calculate staff requirement at the school level.

The circular said all Vidyalayas are required to submit data of the merged section of Sanskrit and regional languages separately, based on the third language selected by students for both class 6 and 9.

It also cited examples to explain the arrangement of language sections and said the number of Sanskrit and regional-language sections would depend on student enrolment. In a school with a single section, separate Sanskrit and regional-language batches may be formed, subject to a minimum strength of 15 students.

In schools with two sections, one Sanskrit and one regional-language section may be maintained. In schools with three sections, principals may decide the distribution of Sanskrit and regional-language sections based on the number of students opting for each language. However, at least one Sanskrit section in each class is mandatory, it clarified. — *PTI*

Centre takes over Delhi's Jaipur Polo Ground

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Officials of the Land & Development Office under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry on Saturday took physical possession of the 15.20-acre Jaipur Polo Ground in the Race Course area here, officials said.

The development follows a 20 May eviction order under which the L&DO sought possession of the land parcel, citing its need for a "larger public purpose." The order, however, offered no details about the intended use of the land.

On 8 June, the Delhi High Court asked a district court to decide on a plea by the Indian Polo Association (IPA) seeking a stay on the eviction notice. However, the district court declined to grant any interim relief against implementing the order.

The IPA termed the eviction "wrongful, arbitrary and contrary to law," and said it would pursue legal remedies to safeguard its rights.

The development follows a 20 May eviction order as per which the L&DO sought possession of the land, citing 'larger public purpose'—*PTI*

In a relief to Delhi Gymkhana Club, the Delhi High Court on 26 May took note of the Centre's submission that it would not take forcible possession of the colonial-era club by 5 June and observed that no interim order was needed at that stage.

Meanwhile, paving the way for the eviction of Jaipur Polo Ground in the Race Course area here, a Delhi court declined to grant interim protection to the Indian Polo Association (IPA) against the Centre's order directing it to vacate the ground.

The order dated 12 June was posted on the court website on Saturday as officials of the Land and Development Office under the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry took physical possession of the 15.20-acre Jaipur Polo Ground. — *PTI*

Air Arabia flight diverted to Kochi after technical issue

KOCHI, 13 JUNE

An Air Arabia flight from Sharjah to Kozhikode was diverted to Cochin International Airport here early Saturday due to a technical issue, officials said. According to a spokesperson of Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL), Air Arabia flight G9 454 landed at the airport due to an issue related to the aircraft's engine reverse thrust system.

As per established safety protocols, a local standby was declared at 3.19am, followed by a full emergency at 3.34am to ensure the readiness of all airport emergency response services. "The aircraft landed safely at 3.38am and was guided to the designated parking bay. The full emergency was withdrawn at 3.45am after all safety checks were completed," the spokesperson said. There were 170 passengers, nine infants and crew members on board. All were safe. Airport operations remained unaffected, the spokesperson added. After the snag was rectified, the aircraft departed for Kozhikode airport at 7.15am. —*PTI*

NEET likely to delay TN engineering counselling

CHENNAI, 13 JUNE

With the National Testing Agency scheduled to conduct the NEET exam on 21 June, the engineering admission counselling schedule in Tamil Nadu is expected to face delays.

Tamil Nadu Engineering Admissions 2026 (TNEA 2026) is a fully digital process encompassing online registration, fee payment, choice filling, seat allotment, and final confirmation. The Directorate of Technical Education (DOTE) under the Higher Education Department had started accepting applications from 3 May till 5 June.

A senior official from DOTE said that although over 3.02 lakh students have enrolled, only 2,45,220 have uploaded their certificates. As the NEET re-exam is scheduled to be held on 21 June, the AICTE has not yet approved the engineering counselling schedule.

"However, certificate verification has begun," he said, adding "the rank list will be published on 29 June as per schedule."

The official said that counselling should be held after the completion of certificate verification.

Higher Education Minister P Viswanathan told the media that a decision on whether to postpone the engineering counselling would be taken in a day or two. — *PTI*

Techie jumps to death with baby; kid safe

HYDERABAD, 13 JUNE

A woman techie jumped to her death from the sixth floor of an apartment here, carrying her six-month-old baby, who survived miraculously. Esha Sahu, 37, jumped off the apartment on Friday evening, leading to her death on the spot. However, her daughter survived as she landed on the cables of a solar fence of the apartment boundary wall.

Sahu was from Madhya Pradesh and was employed in a software firm. Her husband, who is also from the same state, works in the software industry. The baby was admitted to a hospital and she is out of danger, police said on Saturday.

The watchman of a nearby apartment, who heard the baby crying, pulled her out. The woman sent her husband to a shop before taking the extreme step, police said. The dead woman is survived by her husband and two minor daughters.

The couple were married for 13 years. The woman was suffering from depression after the birth of her youngeset daughter six months ago, he said. — *PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

'All Nipah drugs except anti-virals available'

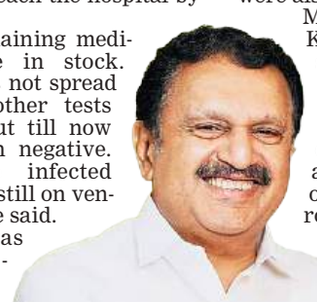
THIRU'PURAM, 13 JUNE

Kerala Health Minister K Muraleedharan rejected the allegation that essential medicines needed for Nipah treatment is not available at the Kozhikode medical college hospital, saying that only anti-viral drug have to be supplied. He told reporters here on Saturday that the anti-viral drug in stock at Chennai had expired and therefore, it will have to be brought from Delhi and will reach the hospital by evening.

"All remaining medicines are in stock. Nipah has not spread and all other tests carried out till now have been negative. The one infected patient is still on ventilator," he said.

He was responding to Leader of Opposition in Assembly Pinarayi Vijayan's allegation a day ago that there was shortage of essential medicines at a time when a Nipah patient was undergoing treatment on ventilator support.

The Health Minister said that Vijayan's remark was being seen only as "political criticism." He also said that the results of the three persons who were in the highest risk category and under observation at the hospital were also negative for Nipah.



Meanwhile, former Kerala Minister Riyas said on Saturday that he had been "sidelined" from the government's anti-Nipah drives in the district and staged a protest outside the control room set up here to monitor the situation. —*PTI*

6 years in jail: Umar, Imam fresh bail pleas in 2020 riots case

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Activists Sharjeel Imam and Umar Khalid have filed new bail applications before a Delhi court in the larger conspiracy case linked to the 2020 northeast Delhi riots. The applications argue that there has been no significant progress in the trial despite the Supreme Court dismissing their earlier pleas over six months ago.

The fresh petitions were submitted before Additional Sessions Judge Sumedh Saini, who had sought a response from the Delhi Police and scheduled the hearing for 4 July. In his plea, Imam stated he has been in custody for six years and that there have been no substantial developments since the Supreme Court's 5 January verdict, which rejected his bail plea. The apex court had refused bail to Khalid and Imam in the 2020 riots case, while granting relief to five other accused.

- Khalid, Imam and others were booked under UAPA and IPC, for masterminding the Feb 2020 riots, during protests against the CAA and proposed NRC, leaving 53 dead and over 700 injured

A bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and N V Anjaria noted a prima facie case against Khalid and Imam under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), observing that all accused did not have the same level of participation. Bail was granted to activists Gulfisha Fatima, Meeran Haider, Shifa Ur Rehman, Mohd Saleem Khan, and Shadab Ahmad.

Khalid, Imam, and others were booked under UAPA and IPC provisions, accused of being the masterminds behind the February 2020 riots, which erupted during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and proposed NRC, leaving 53 dead and over 700 injured. —*PTI*

9 women officers commissioned at IMA

DEHRADUN, 13 JUNE

Family honour and emotion marked the Indian Military Academy's (IMA) Spring Term 2026 Passing Out Parade on Saturday as 515 officer cadets, including nine women, were commissioned into the Indian Army.

The pipping ceremony transformed the academy grounds into a scene of celebration, with families gathering on the lawns to pin the new ranks on the shoulders of their sons and daughters.

The batch also marked a significant milestone with the commissioning of nine women officer cadets, an important moment for the institution that has trained generations of Army officers since 1932.

Among them was Shanan Dhaka, who has been posted to eastern Ladakh.

"Coming from a military family, joining the Army was not just a career choice but a way of life," Dhaka said, noting that both her father and grandfather served in the Army.

The parade also celebrated merit. Academy Cadet Adjutant Vishal Kumar won the prestigious Sword of Honour and the Gold Medal for standing first in the Regular Course.

Kumar, who credited his success to a childhood dream of joining the military, had a simple message for the youth: "Morals and leadership by example." Academy Under Officer Prince Raj received the Silver Medal for standing second in the Regular Course, while Senior Under Officer Tejas Bhatt won the Bronze Medal. — PTI

FOOTBALL MANIA

Keralam Argentina fans set up floating stadium on river

KOZHIKODE, 13 JUNE

A stadium in the middle of a Kerala river with the entire Argentine squad standing on it! No, the South American team has not arrived in the state, but it is a float created by football-crazy fans in Pullavoor village here.

Football mania has already gripped the state in the run-up to the World Cup, with posters, flex boards, and cutouts of football stars like Messi and Neymar, and popular teams including Brazil, Argentina, and Portugal, appearing along roads and in villages, and people colouring their homes in the colours of top teams.

Now, in Pullavoor, Argentina fans have set up a float in the middle of the river in the form of a mini football stadium, with cutouts of the Argentine squad on top of it.

The creators of the float, which has been set up on boats, said they were confident that Argentina would win the Football World Cup this time as well defeating their opponents. — PTI

The floating football field built on boats on a river in Kerala —*SCREENGRAB*

Devaswom pleader resigns after CM seeks his exit

T'PURAM, 13 JUNE

Devaswom Special Pleader KB Pradeep resigned on Saturday after Chief Minister VD Satheesan sought his resignation, as the opposition demanded a probe into the circumstances leading to the decision.

"The appointment was made with good intentions. But devotees expressed concern over it," Devaswom Minister K Muraleedharan told reporters here.

This came after leaders from the opposition Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) alleged that Pradeep had appeared for some of the accused in cases related to the alleged misappropriation of gold from the Sabarimala temple, and criticised the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) government's decision to appoint him.

Leader of Opposition Pinarayi Vijayan said it "was surprising to hear the Devaswom Minister say that he was unaware of the matter." CPI(M) state committee member V Sivankutty alleged that appointing Pradeep as the Devaswom Department's counsel was part of a clear conspiracy to derail the Sabarimala case.

Senior CPI(M) leader V N Vasavan said people have the right to know the truth.

Senior BJP leaders Kummanam Rajasekharan and P K Krishnadas said the decision had "betrayed" crores of devotees. — PTI

'WILL WE PERFORM THE SAME AGAIN?'

NEET re-test leaves pupils anxious and demoralised

Students who had spent months and, in some cases, years preparing for the exam said the cancellation came as a shock and forced them back into an intense preparation cycle —MAGNIFIC

Several NEET aspirants preparing to reappear for the medical entrance examination say they are facing heightened anxiety, disrupted routines, loss of confidence and growing distrust in the examination system following the cancellation of the earlier test.

Students who had spent months and, in some cases, years preparing for the exam said the cancellation came as a shock and forced them back into an intense preparation cycle.

Ridhima Bansal, who appeared for both the Class 12 board examinations and NEET this year, said the cancellation of the entrance test has left her emotionally drained and she is struggling to resume her studies.

"I was expecting a good score that would have helped me secure a seat in a medical college. I came out of the NEET exam feeling happy and confident that I would get into a medical college. Then suddenly, the news came that the exam has been cancelled," Bansal told PTI.

"When I reopened my books, I was not feeling like studying," she said, adding that the uncertainty has also affected her daily routine and mental well-being.

"Sleep issues have started because all-nighters are again happening. After the exam, I was sleeping peacefully. Now I am back to sleeping at 3 a.m., waking up at 7, attending classes, giving mock tests and studying again. Mental health is affected. I don't feel like eating," Bansal said.

She said the controversy has also weakened her faith in the examination system. "The trust is over because when the news came, NTA was saying it was just a few questions. But even if a few questions were out, that is also a paper leak. Why should even a few questions get out," she asked.

"I don't trust the system now," she added.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) did not respond to queries seeking its response on issues raised by students.

Another aspirant, Vaibhavi, 17, said she was on a family vacation when she learnt that the examination had been cancelled and would be conducted again.

"I was disheartened about the exam being cancelled. I was on a family vacation when I got the notification that the exam is being cancelled and they are going to re-conduct the exam. So I panicked thinking what is going to happen now," she said.

Vaibhavi said the controversy affected her concentration and motivation.

"I don't feel like studying anymore. It's like more of a joke. You should read as much as you want, but it's not going to be good enough," she said.

"I would zone out while studying and keep thinking about what would happen now. I would completely zone out and not acknowledge anything around me," she added.

She said the break between the May 3 examination and the announcement of the re-test disrupted her preparation.

"There was a gap after 3 May exam and then suddenly we had to start preparing again. Once that continuity breaks, it becomes difficult to get back into the same rhythm," she said.

Vaibhavi also expressed concerns about the upcoming examination.

"My plan was to get around 550 or 530 marks so that I could get a government college. But everyone is saying that re-NEET will be very hard. I think the paper is going to be hard. So, I am scared," she said.

Madhuri Sudhir Shelar, who had prepared for NEET for two years, said she was devastated when she learnt that the examination had been cancelled.

"It hurt a lot because I had been preparing for two years. After studying so hard for so long, hearing this news was extremely painful. It felt very bad," she said.

Shelar said she had walked out of the examination centre believing her hard work had paid off.

"The paper was easy. Biology was especially easy. When I came out of the examination centre, I felt really happy. I thought, 'This time I'll make it'," she said.

However, the events that followed left her demoralised. She said her confidence has dropped sharply since then.

"My confidence has definitely dropped. I don't feel like studying at all. Everything feels very different. But I'm still studying because my future depends on it. I'm motivating myself, telling myself that I have goals to achieve and a future to build. That's the only reason I'm continuing," she said.

The NEET-UG for admissions into medical courses took place on May 3 but was cancelled by the NTA on 12 May amid allegations of a paper leak. The CBI is currently investigating this matter, and a retest is scheduled for 21 June.

Psychologist Bhavna Barmi advised aspirants to focus on what remains within their control.

"The examination is around the corner, so they can start using good grounding techniques such as mindfulness, which will help them manage their anxiety," she said.

She also encouraged students to follow small, structured daily study routines so that they feel less overwhelmed.

Reassuring aspirants, Barmi added, "A setback doesn't define their entire journey. It's just a curve on the road, and they should see it like that."

Meanwhile, the Delhi Parents Association (DPA) president Aprajita Gautam said the controversy surrounding NEET-UG had deepened students' distrust in the examination system, especially as it came amid reports of issues in other major exams.

"When children are on social media and see one issue after another, they begin to feel that the system is deteriorating," she said, adding that repeated controversies had created a sense of uncertainty among aspirants and parents alike.

According to Gautam, students who had performed well in NEET-UG were particularly affected by the prospect of a re-examination.

"A child who knows he or she has done well will naturally worry whether they will be able to perform at the same level again," she said.

Gautam said the lack of visible accountability had contributed to a growing trust deficit.

"Students and parents will believe in the system only when they see action being taken against those responsible. We often hear that people have been arrested, but there is little information about what happens afterwards," she said.

Timely acceptance of responsibility and transparent action against those involved in examination lapses would help restore confidence, she added.

Highlighting the emotional burden on aspirants, Gautam said many students spend years preparing for highly competitive examinations and are now being forced to relive the stress of preparation.

"The child who would normally be enjoying the summer break after the examination is back at home studying again. It is easy for adults to say, 'Just take the exam again', but for students, the psychological impact is much deeper," she said. —PTI

SALAR ساڈا

Measles, dengue on watch as World Cup kicks off

While millions of soccer fans cheer or groan over World Cup matches spanning North America, health officials will be on high alert for germs.

A heatwave may be the most obvious health threat. But infectious diseases can spread in a crowd, and experts are set to scrutinise wastewater, hospital visits, even social media for any signs that an outbreak might be brewing.

Measles, one of the most contagious diseases, is among the top concerns, sparking a warning this week from the Pan American Health Organization, PAHO. With a nearly six-week stretch of packed stadiums, bars and tourist sites in 16 cities, officials are on the lookout for a long list of infections, from the stomach bug norovirus to mosquito-borne dengue fever.

"This is truly a marathon," said Palak Raval-Nelson, Philadelphia's health commissioner.

The mass gatherings come at a tense moment for budget-strapped health agencies in the US The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hit hard by Trump administration staffing cuts, already was grappling with a growing Ebola outbreak in central Africa and a cruise ship hantavirus outbreak.

While CDC officials have advised state and local health departments behind the scenes, its expected World Cup disease surveillance dashboard still was "in final development" days before games began, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

"Our public health professionals are pretty stretched," said global health specialist Rebecca Katz of Georgetown University, who is leading an unusual new hub to help.

At the Health Security Operations Center, a joint effort between Georgetown and MedStar Health, workers are analysing data from around the country so they can alert health authorities, even emergency rooms, to any early signs of trouble. The centre is issuing daily "situation reports" about disease trends around World Cup host cities and team base camps to several hundred local and federal public health groups, emergency management and hospital officials and others who've signed up.

"It's important that we don't become alarmist," said MedStar emergency medicine specialist Dr Shane Kappler. "We're trying to be the insurance policy."

MEASLES TOP CONCERN FOR POTENTIAL WORLD CUP SPREAD

Already more than 2,000 people in the US have come down with measles this year, nearly as many as during all of last year, according to the CDC. Patients can spread measles before the rash appears and they realise they're sick. Not too long ago, the US seldom saw measles except from international travel by unvaccinated people.

Now with frequent US outbreaks, "actually a lot of our international partners are worried about measles being exported to them after the games", said Georgetown's Katz.

Measles is spreading in Canada, too, and has exceeded 11,000 cases in Mexico, according to PAHO. It's urging soccer fans to be sure they're vaccinated, with a health campaign saying a single measles patient can spread the virus to up to 18 unprotected people.

IS EBOLA A CONCERN AT WORLD CUP?

Brown University's Dr Craig Spencer, who survived Ebola while working in the West Africa outbreak over a decade ago, said he's repeatedly asked about the risk of Ebola during the World Cup — but "for me, Ebola is not the No 1 or No 2 or even No 3 threat".

"I am concerned about importation of measles, I am much more concerned about the importation of other infectious threats that may not seem as scary to us as Ebola," Spencer said.

Many health experts agree that the risk of Ebola spreading in the US is very low. That's partly because of government travel screenings and restrictions on people recently in outbreak-affected areas. Moreover, Ebola spreads by contact with bodily fluids from someone showing symptoms, not through the air like measles or respiratory viruses. "One fortunate thing about this virus is you're most contagious when you're really quite ill. It's not like COVID, where you could be sitting next to someone who doesn't even know they're infected and perhaps contract the virus," said Jennifer Nuzzo, director of Brown's Pandemic Center.

HOW TO SPOT BREWING DISEASES

People with certain viral or bacterial infections shed genetic material that sophisticated testing of wastewater can spot, an early warning system. For example, measles can appear in wastewater days before an emergency room sees its first patients.

This week's surveillance reports from Katz's center note that wastewater testing recently found diarrhea-causing rotavirus, hepatitis A and the stomach bug norovirus in some parts of the US, something to watch as soccer crowds arrive. In Dallas, officials ramped up wastewater screening including at the international airport, casting a wide net rather than looking for specific illnesses, said Dr Phil Huang, director of Dallas County Health and Human Services. —PTI

The mass gatherings come at a tense moment for budget-strapped health agencies in the US –PIXABAY

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

EU rolls out tough new migration laws, rights groups raise alarm

The European Union implemented a new set of rules Friday governing how each of its 27 member states will deal with irregular migration and asylum seekers.

The European Migration and Asylum Pact is the culmination of years of gruelling negotiations that overhauled the previous system, which was widely considered a failure and gave far-right parties a potent issue to win votes.

All EU members were meant to be prepared for Friday's implementation by adapting laws, training staff and beefing up border infrastructure. But even the European Commission admits no member is completely ready.

Human rights advocates warn the pact could add to the difficulties of asylum seekers face while trying to find safe haven in the EU.

Here is what to know:

SCREENING AND FAST-TRACKING BORDER PROCEDURES

Under the new rules, foreigners will be screened at EU borders for up to seven days before they are admitted.

Asylum seekers from countries listed as "safe" by the EU or pose a "security threat" will go through faster asylum procedures of three months instead of six. Some applicants may be kept at the border while their cases are processed. They will be given only one chance to appeal a rejected application.

The European Commission says some member states still need to implement a new biometric database called Eurodac that will register and store information of adults and children as young as 6.

Many more countries need to set up border facilities to handle screening, asylum processing and detentions. Work also is needed to ensure there are independent rights monitoring at the border, the commission said. Swiftly returning rejected asylum seekers

One of the pillars of the new pact is to speed up voluntary and forced returns of rejected asylum seekers by automatically issuing return orders when an application is rejected.

A clear political priority of the centre and far-right politicians who swept to power in 2024 across the EU, returnees are slated to be sent to countries deemed safe like Syria and Bangladesh.

The European Agency for Asylum said there were about 8,02,000 pending first-time asylum applications in March.

Member states also are working with EU lawmakers to allow for the creation of "return hubs" in third countries where they can send migrants who can't be repatriated. Questions about deportation centres are being quietly negotiated between a group of five nations and potential partners abroad.

Human rights advocates have criticised the new rules, arguing they undermine the right to seek asylum by rushing assessments –UN

SHARING THE BURDEN BETWEEN MEMBER NATIONS

Among the most contentious issues that has divided EU countries was sharing responsibility for asylum seekers, especially in times of crisis.

Because migrants must apply for asylum in the first EU country they enter, front line countries along the Mediterranean like Greece and Italy have long complained they bear the weight of irregular arrivals.

Citing their inability to cope under pressure, these countries allowed passage of many migrants to northern and western Europe without permission. This shifted some of the burden onto northern countries like Germany and Sweden that saw asylum applications soar to record levels, bringing their migration systems to the brink of collapse.

The new pact includes a solidarity mechanism to ensure border countries aren't left on their own. Other EU members will either take in a share of asylum seekers or offer financial support to compensate. Countries can also offset their share if they receive migrants through secondary movements, meaning when a migrant arrives in one country and moves on to another.

But not all member states were happy with this solution. Poland for example suspended the right to asylum since early 2025 citing the weaponisation of migration on its border with Belarus. Originally a temporary measure, it has been extending the suspension since.

Hungary's new prime minister Peter Magyar is continuing many of the hardline immigration policies of his predecessor, Viktor Orban, including a refusal to take in migrants. But Magyar has said he would realign Hungary's asylum procedures to avoid being fined 1 million euros daily for Orban's policy that broke the bloc's asylum rules.

PACT WILL NOT BRING IMMEDIATE CHANGE

The commission has admitted work on implementing the pact will continue after June 12 since no country is fully ready.

"It won't be a like a light switch turning on 12 June," said Susan Fratzke, a senior policy analyst with the Migration Policy Institute. "Some of these things will take time." The lack of clarity and consistency is problematic, said Susanna Zanfrini, director of the International Rescue Committee's Italy office.

That ambiguity "creates uncertainty for both people seeking protection and the organisations supporting them at the very moment they most need clear information about their rights, options, and access to support to survive, recover and rebuild their lives," she said.

HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS CRY FOUL

Human rights advocates have criticised the new rules, arguing they undermine the right to seek asylum by rushing assessments.

They say accelerated procedures introduce racial profiling while denying international protection to applicants with legitimate claims, while also warning of an expected spike in prolonged detentions at EU borders. —PTI

Iran to sign deal electronically: Pak

Hormuz won't be like the past: Araghchi indicates fee

ISLAMABAD, 13 JUNE

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said a US-Iran peace deal could be finalised within the next 24 hours, raising hopes of a diplomatic breakthrough after months of conflict and negotiations.

"We are closer to a peace deal than ever before... Pakistan is preparing for the electronic signing of the peace deal, followed by technical level talks next week," Sharif said in a post on X.

He thanked the United States and Iran for their "ongoing commitment" during the negotiations and expressed appreciation for support from countries in the region, including Qatar.

US President Donald Trump later shared a screen grab of Sharif's post on Truth Social. Sharif's post comes after Trump said the deal would be signed in Europe on Sunday by Vice President JD Vance.

However, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei said that Tehran was approaching the deal "pessimistically", owing to the fact that the US had bombed his country during the previous rounds of negotiations over the past year.

"Although it will not happen tomorrow, the possibility that it could take place in the coming days cannot be ruled out," Baghaei said in a statement carried by state TV.

The funeral for late Iranian supreme leader and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is set to take place between 4 and 9 July during Muharram —*IRNA*

The reason for the discrepancy in the statements was not immediately clear.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi outlined the structure of a potential memorandum of understanding, stating on state-media that Iran had won the war and that the future of the Strait of Hormuz will "not be like the past".

"Naturally, after such a victory, it is necessary to consolidate it through an agreement or understanding," he said.

Araghchi said the agreement consists of two stages and that the nuclear issue was not discussed in the first stage and was deferred to the second phase.

He said Iran and Oman were in the process of finalising a joint legal and operational framework for managing transit through the Strait.

"The first thing mentioned in the agreement is that the US naval blockade be lifted," Araghchi said. "According to international law, it is not possible to collect tolls from the Strait of Hormuz, but service fees will be collected. Paying compensation to Iran is in plan."

The mechanism is expected to be announced within 60 days.

He said that a ceasefire in Lebanon was discussed in the negotiations. On the nuclear issue, he said, "At this stage, we did not discuss nuclear issues. However, in any case, our position regarding enriched materials is that if dilution is to take place, it will happen inside Iran, not in another country." —*Agencies*

Hormuz back to half-flow: US Energy Secretary

WASHINGTON, 13 JUNE

US Energy Secretary Chris Wright said that the military has been helping escort roughly 7 million barrels of oil a day from the Persian Gulf – about half the pre-war flow of oil that passed through the Strait of Hormuz.

Speaking at a Bloomberg event on Friday, Wright bragged about the US military and added that the levels are rising and said that no Iranian crude was getting out.

About 20 million barrels of oil a day moved through the Arabian Gulf via the strait before the war, Wright said. About 5 million of that flow has shifted to pipelines and other transportation options, and output in the rest of the world has increased by about 1 million, he added, leaving a gap of about 14 million barrels. The veracity of his comments were not clear. —*Agencies*

The Israeli Army issued evacuation warnings for dozens of Lebanese settlements on Saturday —*NNA*

ISRAEL PRESSES FORWARD IN LEBANON AS POTENTIAL DEAL NEARS

BEIRUT, 13 JUNE

The Lebanese army on Saturday withdrew its troops from a base in a southern Lebanese village after Israeli troops advanced in an area nearby, a military official said.

The departure from the army barracks in Kfar Tebnit came as the Israeli military issued an evacuation warning for about 20 locations, including the southern city of Nabatiyeh and nearby villages.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported airstrikes on Saturday on different villages near Nabatiyeh, including one that killed two people in Deir al-Zahrani. Nabatiyeh was subjected to artillery shelling.

Israeli troops were likely trying to capture the strategic Ali Taher hill on the edge of Kfar Tebnit that overlooks large parts of Nabatiyeh and some of the roads that link the city with nearby villages. Israeli troops have already captured a nearby strategic mountain with the Beaufort Castle in the deepest incursion into the country since 2000.

This comes as an Iran-US deal appears to near. Iran has repeatedly said that any peace deal requires a ceasefire in Lebanon as well. —*Agencies*

21 terrorists killed in Pak's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PESHAWAR, 13 JUNE

Security forces have killed 21 terrorists in a series of intelligence-led operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa over the past three days, according to the military's media wing. Among those killed in North Waziristan were four ring leaders from Fitna-al-Khwarij, associated with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), involved in numerous terrorist acts, including attacks on security personnel and civilians. The media wing reported, "A total of 48 khwarij have been killed since last week in the highly skilful and precise operations." Weapons and ammunition were recovered. Sanitisation operations will persist to eliminate remaining terrorists. The Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies noted a sharp deterioration in security in May driven by violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.—*PTI*

Taiwan's Oppn supports dialogue with China

WASHINGTON, 13 JUNE

Taiwan's Opposition leader, Cheng Li-wun, expressed her party's commitment to defending the island while emphasising the importance of peace through dialogue with Beijing. She stated, "I think our basic stances are the same — that is peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and to avoid any unnecessary war." During her visit to Washington, where she met lawmakers and scholars, Cheng said she also met Trump administration officials but provided limited details. She met Xi Jinping in Beijing in April, describing him as "very gentle and very nice and very real," and believes he seeks peaceful means to address Taiwan. While China has cut official contact with Taipei for a decade, Taiwan continues to promote dialogue to prevent conflict amid rising military activity. —*PTI*

Swiss await result on 10M population cap vote

BERN, 13 JUNE

Switzerland's national referendum on a far-right proposal to limit the population to 10 million by 2050 concludes this weekend, amid warnings of economic damage if approved. A "yes" vote would oblige the government to restrict family reunification, residency, and asylum if the population reaches 9.5 million before 2050 and would force withdrawal from the EU's free movement agreement if the threshold is exceeded. The Swiss People's party (SVP), backing the initiative, argues uncontrolled immigration strains housing and services, with the SVP leader stating, "Uncontrolled immigration is causing Switzerland to grow far too quickly." The government, parliament, trade unions, and business groups oppose the plan. —*AGENCIES*

Judge awards legal fees to Lively in Baldoni dispute

NEW YORK, 13 JUNE

A judge has ruled that actress Blake Lively can recover legal fees from Justin Baldoni but not punitive damages in their 2024 film legal dispute. Judge Lewis J Liman explained, "Lively can recover legal fees and costs related to her defence against a countersuit," citing California law protecting victims of harassment from retaliatory lawsuits. The judge noted, "An exception would be if Baldoni and his company proved malice," but they did not. Liman rejected her claims for triple damages, stating they did not align with federal rules. Both sides claimed victory; Lively's lawyers said the ruling shows she acted in good faith.—*PTI*

The strikes reportedly took place earlier the week —*SCREENGRAB*

US kills Tren de Aragua leader in Venezuela

WASHINGTON, 13 JUNE

President stated on Friday that a "swift and lethal kinetic" US strike killed Hector Rusthenford Guerrero Flores, whom he called "the infamous leader" of the Tren de Aragua gang.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth posted on X that the strike occurred earlier in the week on a Tren de Aragua compound in Venezuela.

Tren de Aragua has been labelled by the United States as a terrorist organization. Guerrero Flores, also known as "Nino Guerrero", also was charged in a New York federal court with racketeering conspiracy and other crimes, including lending support to terrorists, authorities announced in December. The US State Department had offered rewards of up to $5 million for information leading to his arrest

"Tren de Aragua terrorists no longer have safe haven in Venezuela or anywhere else," Trump posted on his Truth Social. "We will find these vicious murderers and drug lords anytime, anyplace, and send them to the depths of hell where they belong."

Hegseth indicated that the operation was conducted with Venezuela, although the country did not immediately comment.

The Trump administration alleged that the Tren de Aragua was under then Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro's control before arresting him in January. The US government has also blown up dozens of small alleged "drug" boats it often linked to the gang in the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean since September, killing at least 207 people. —*PTI*

CUBAN PREZ ANNOUNCES ECONOMIC REFORMS

HAVANA, 13 JUNE

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel on Friday announced a package of economic reforms aimed at attracting investment, expanding participation by Cubans living abroad in the economy and decentralising parts of the country's administration.

The President did not provide too many details or a timetable, however.

Díaz-Canel said officials are evaluating measures related to foreign trade, exports, supply chains and logistics. Without elaborating, he suggested the government could eliminate mandatory state intermediaries in import and export operations and grant tariff benefits to those who bring raw materials into the country for production.

The announcement comes as Cubans have struggled with fuel shortages as a result of the U.S. oil blockade and food insecurity. In January, the United States tightened restrictions on Cuba's oil supplies in an effort to pressure the island's government to change its political and economic model, exacerbating challenges that have persisted for about five years.

The U.S. State Department had no comment on the Díaz-Canel remarks and referred to the statement released Thursday on the latest sanctions. —*PTI*

Russia launched 118 drones at Ukraine overnight into Saturday, resulting in eight casualties —*UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICES*

Ukraine's EU membership talks start next week

BRUSSELS, 12 JUNE

European Union nations agreed on Friday to open membership talks with Ukraine next week, officially launching the process for the war-torn country to eventually join the world's biggest trading bloc.

At a meeting in Brussels, ambassadors from the 27 EU nations decided to officially open negotiations with Ukraine and with Moldova, which Russia has also sought to preserve in its sphere of influence, on Monday in Luxembourg.

Ukraine sees EU membership as an important "security guarantee" for a stable future once war with Russia ends.

Its best guarantee would be NATO membership, but the US government insists that cannot happen.

Others oppose it joining while fighting continues. Russia, meanwhile, had justified its full-scale invasion by stating its national security would be threatened if it had a NATO country so close to its borders. However, Russia has not objected to EU membership for Ukraine.

Countries hoping to join the EU must complete negotiations in 35 policy areas, or chapters, ranging from agriculture to trade, a process which can take years.

"This is a recognition of the determination, courage and hard work shown by both countries in advancing reforms, even in the face of immense challenges," EU Council President Antonio Costa and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement. —*PTI*

Ukraine kills 1 in Russia; Moscow drones kill 8

KYIV, 13 JUNE

A Ukrainian drone attack killed one person and injured three in Russia's southern Krasnodar region, local officials said Saturday. Meanwhile, Russian strikes on Ukraine killed at least at least 8 civilians and injured a further 62.

Russian news outlets reported that a Black Sea export terminal transporting terminal crude oil, petroleum products and liquefied gas in the village of Volna was damaged.

Ukraine has been striking deeper and more accurately into Russia recently. President Vladimir Putin said that the strikes have impacted the Russian economy.

"They are certainly causing us damage, but we are recovering quickly," Putin said according to TASS. "We will increase strikes on enemy infrastructure to deprive it of any desire to attack our civilian facilities."

Meanwhile, Russia 118 dronesagainst Ukraine overnight, the Air Force reported. —*Agencies*

Clashes in Congo over Prez' term limits

KINSHASA, 13 JUNE

Violent clashes erupted in Congo's capital during a rally against proposed constitutional changes that opponents say could allow President Félix Tshisekedi to seek a third term. Organised by opposition coalition C64, the demonstration was dispersed by police with tear gas after protesters clashed with pro-government supporters outside Parliament.

Congo faces multiple crises, including an Ebola outbreak and ongoing conflict with Rwanda-backed M23 rebels. Tshisekedi, 62, has been in office since 2019 and is due to serve until 2028, but has expressed willingness to seek a third term if approved via referendum.

The constitution bars amendments to presidential limits, but a bill in the National Assembly could permit changes in case of "major dysfunction," potentially following a referendum. The opposition coalition, formed in May, condemns the proposed amendments as a "serious threat" to stability.

Prominent Opposition figure Martin Fayulu was injured during the clashes. —*PTI*

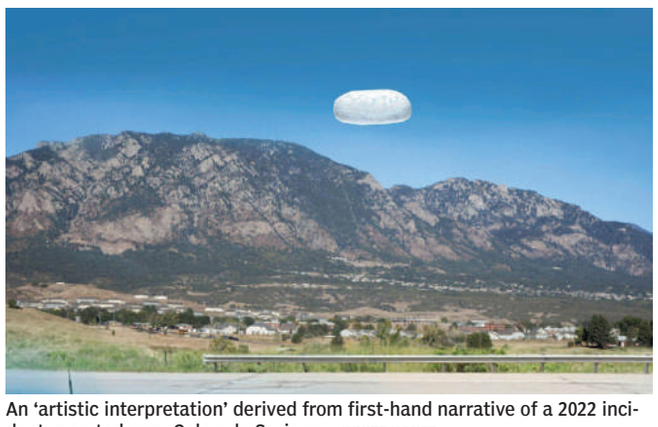
OBJECTS SHAPED LIKE POTATOES

US' new 'UFO files' describe 'glowing orbs'

WASHINGTON, 13 JUNE

One was a rotating disc that sent out beams of light. Another was a shining red orb of a hue the observer had never seen before. Then there was the one compared to a potato, and also a bean, but with a coat of shimmering, fish-like scales.

Those were some of the UFOs described in documents released Friday by the Pentagon, the third release since President Donald Trump directed his administration to give the public full disclosure around what it knows about alien life and mysterious objects in the sky. The newest batch also includes a 2008 CIA report from Zimbabwe labelled as "never before released."


An 'artistic interpretation' derived from first-hand narrative of a 2022 incident reported near Colorado Springs —*WHITE HOUSE*

The 72 files released on Friday don't include the kind of blockbuster revelation that Trump has teased. There's no conclusive evidence of alien life or government cover-ups. But the files reveal new details about some recent sightings, along with the government's efforts to explain what many find inexplicable.

The analysis was conducted by the Pentagon's All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office, which Congress created in 2022 to investigate reports of unidentified anomalous phenomena, also known as UAP. Previous reports from the agency say it has not found any evidence of extraterrestrial life.

The Trump administration's transparency campaign has led to the release of about 300 files dating to the 1940s, some brand-new to the public and some adding detail on previously known cases. —*PTI*

Gabbard says US funding biolabs in 30 countries

WASHINGTON, 13 JUNE

US Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Tulsi Gabbard on Thursday (local time) disclosed that the United States has historically provided funding for more than 120 biological laboratories across over 30 countries.

The statement indicated that many of these facilities have engaged in research involving hazardous and highly contagious pathogens, including "Gain-of-Function" research, with what the DNI described as minimal oversight. "Gain-of-Function" refers to genetically modifying organisms or pathogens to enhance certain characteristics.

Declassified records highlight that over 40 laboratories in Ukraine were involved in handling Soviet-era biological warfare pathogens. These facilities reportedly conducted research on Especially Dangerous Pathogens (EDPs), including anthrax, Ebola, MERS, SARS, and the plague. This includes instances such as the Kherson Diagnostic Laboratory, which received USD 17,28,822 in funding while its permit for working with specific pathogens remained listed as "in progress."

"Despite the obvious potential for catastrophic global impact ... politicians, so-called health professionals like Dr Fauci, and entities within the Biden administration's national security team lied to the American people ... and threatened those who attempted to expose the truth," Gabbard said. In response, President Donald Trump has officially ended federal funding for Gain-of-Function research globally. —*ANI*

Anthropic halts Fable 5, Mythos 5 AI globally

US issues directive citing national security; India had flagged similar issues earlier

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Anthropic disabled Fable 5 and Mythos 5 for all our customers to ensure compliance –AI

Artificial intelligence major Anthropic abruptly suspended access to its advanced AI models, Fable 5 and Mythos 5, for all customers globally following an export control directive from the US government citing national security concerns.

According to the company's statement, the US government issued a directive to suspend all access to Fable 5 and Mythos 5 for any foreign national, whether inside or outside the US, including foreign-national Anthropic employees.

The suspension is expected to impact Indian users and enterprises, as India is Anthropic's second-largest market.

The development follows major partnerships between the AI firm and Indian IT giants, including a recent deal with TCS to equip 50,000 employees with Anthropic's models, and a collaboration announced by Infosys in February to deploy advanced enterprise AI solutions using the Claude family of models.

Furthermore, select Indian government agencies and private firms were recently granted access to the Mythos model as part of a cybersecurity initiative called Project Glasswing, according to sources familiar with the matter.

The US directive follows earlier alarms raised within the Indian government regarding advanced AI models. In April, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman directed banks and financial institutions to bolster their cybersecurity frameworks and coordinate with CERT-In to counter emerging AI-linked threats.

The high-level meeting was convened amid global concerns surrounding Anthropic's Claude Mythos system, which the company had withheld from public release due to its advanced ability to exploit software bugs.

Anthropic stated it received the directive from the US government on Friday. While the letter did not provide specific details regarding the national security concern, the company understands that the government believes it has become aware of a method to bypass Fable 5.

Anthropic defended its models, saying it reviewed the technique and found it to be a "narrow, non-universal jailbreak" that amounts to asking the model to read a specific codebase and fix software flaws.

The company argued that this level of capability is widely available from other models, including OpenAI's GPT-5.5, and is routinely used by cybersecurity defenders.

Apologising to its customers for the disruption, Anthropic termed the government's action a "misunderstanding" and stated that it is currenlty working to restore access as soon as possible. —*PTI*

IIM-Calcutta allows MBA students to pursue start-ups

KOLKATA, 13 JUNE

IIM-Calcutta has introduced an initiative enabling MBA students to pursue start-ups without permanently forfeiting campus placements, the institute announced on Saturday. The Director, Alok Kumar Rai, unveiled the scheme at Friday's ceremony for 480 students entering the 63rd MBA batch. Students opting to spend a year building start-ups can rejoin the placement process the following year if they wish. The batch comprises 67 per cent men and 33 per cent women, with 41 per cent freshers and 59 per cent with prior work experience. The Freshers' Welcome was attended by Ganesh Mohan, MD of Bajaj Finserv Asset Management Ltd. Pranav Adani, MD of Adani Enterprises, announced scholarships for six meritorious MBA students and signed an MoU with IIM-Calcutta—*PTI*

GRID India calls for fallback in power market

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

GRID India has requested a fallback mechanism and institutional ring-fencing in its comments on draft regulations by the CERC, supporting market coupling in India's power exchanges. In a submission on June 8, GRID India noted the proposal to designate the state-owned grid operator as the sole Market Coupling Operator (MCO) would simplify implementation but risk creating a single point of failure. It said a regulatory fallback should allow price discovery during disruptions. The company suggested creating a dedicated cell or subsidiary for MCO functions and recommended a Market Coupling Steering Committee. GRID India also urged stakeholder consultation and transition provisions, emphasising fair fee determination and operational efficiency. —*PTI*

WASTERWATER LEFT INTO LAKES

Tata's iPhone unit in trouble over water pollution in TN

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) issued a show-cause notice on 15 May to Tata Electronics' components factory for iPhone production in Krishnagiri District of Tamil Nadu.

It concerns the alleged discharge of wastewater from the unit into a nearby lake and agricultural land, as well as storing the wastewater inside the premises in a way that contaminates local groundwater. Measures taken without a satisfactory explanation from the company within 15 days from the date of receipt could include closure of the factory or power supply being cut off, the notice says.

The TNPB reportedly conducted multiple inspections after receiving several complaints from the owner of the adjoining land, to find that the water storage unit overflowed and contaminated open wells in the area.

Tata allegedly failed to take steps suggested by the board on 24 December 2025 to mitigate these issues. "We are compliant with the regulator, and have already responded to the notice. Corrective actions have been taken," a company official told Business Standard.

Tata Electronics is a major partner in Apple's plans to shift production to India. It is also the second-biggest supplier to Apple in South Asia after Taiwan's Foxconn. —*Salar News*

Nestlé India denies Maggi infestation claims

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Nestlé India has rejected social media allegations about infestation in Maggi noodles, asserting laboratory tests confirmed the products met all quality and safety standards. In a stock exchange clarification, the company stated it was made aware of the complaint through the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), following concerns raised by an unverified account on social media platform X.

"We categorically reject allegations circulating in the media based on an unverified account regarding the presence of infestation, allegedly on MAGGI noodles," Nestlé India responded to NSE and BSE queries on a 12 June media report. The company said it has "yet to receive" any sample for assessment and did not get any response from the complainant, while the social media account remained unreachable.

As part of standard procedure, a reference sample from the same batch was sent for testing to an independent FSSAI-notified and NABL-accredited laboratory, which found it free of infestation. The company added that quality analysis on batches and market samples confirmed compliance with standards and the absence of infestation.

Nestlé India said it has already submitted a detailed representation, including quality records, batch and market sample data, and test reports, to relevant authorities. It reiterated its commitment to stringent quality and safety standards and transparency with regulators, expressing confidence that facts will establish the truth. —*PTI*

OFCD case: SEBI moves SC against SAT relief to SICCL employees

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has moved the Supreme Court partially challenging a Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) order granting relief to four managers and the company secretary of Sahara India Commercial Corporation Ltd (SICCL).

A vacation bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana is scheduled to hear the plea of SEBI on 18 June.

On 9 March, the SAT had upheld the regulatory action by the SEBI against SICCL, conducted in 2018, in connection with the alleged illegal issuance of optionally fully convertible debentures (OFCDs). It also dismissed appeals filed by the company and its directors against the action.

At the same time, the tribunal had allowed a separate appeal filed by four managers and the company secretary. It noted that the prospectus had been signed by the company secretary pursuant to powers of attorney granted by the directors, who remained responsible as principals for the acts of their agent.

The SEBI has now challenged that part of the ruling before the apex court. —*PTI*

JP Morgan sees gold at $6,000/ounce

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

According to a latest commodities research report by JP Morgan Global Research, gold is expected to average USD 6,000 per ounce in the final quarter of 2026,

According to the report, spot gold prices rallied strongly at the start of 2026 before cooling in March and touching an intra-year low of USD 4,170 per ounce.

JP Morgan said uncertainty geopolitical tensionssupport demand for gold as a safe-haven asset. The report also highlighted the role of central banks, which have been a key driver of gold's rally. —*PTI*

SpaceX IPO a true test for capitalism: Uday Kotak

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Founder and Non-Executive Director of Kotak Mahindra Bank, Uday Kotak, on Saturday described the blockbuster initial public offering (IPO) of SpaceX as a "true test for capitalism," and "SpaceX IPO, listing, and beyond, is a true test for capitalism."

Commenting on the listing of the Elon Musk-led company, Kotak said in a post on X, that the company's valuation defies conventional metrics and reflects a massive bet on humanity's future.

He noted that the company's market value cannot be assessed through traditional frameworks, stating that "the valuation does not fit any traditional matrix and is a huge bet on the future course of planet earth." Kotak said the success or failure of such a valuation would ultimately depend on how the future unfolds.

SpaceX shares surged on their market debut, opening at USD 150 against an IPO price of USD 135 before climbing to USD 164. The rally made it the sixth-largest US-listed firm by market capitalisation and the first American company to debut on the stock market with a valuation exceeding USD 1 trillion. —*ANI*

'China-India productivity gap widens'

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

India's labour productivity gap with China has grown by over USD 30,000 per worker since 2000, despite decades of strong economic growth, according to an Equirus Securities report. Titled "Labour Productivity in Emerging Economies: Catch-up, Innovation, and now AI", it states India's GDP per worker has more than tripled since 1995, but productivity gains lag behind peers like China, South Korea, and Vietnam.

"India's productivity gap with China has widened by over USD 30,000 per worker in absolute terms since 2000, despite decades of strong GDP growth," the report said. It noted Vietnam's post-pandemic foreign investment as a standout, while India faces structural constraints.

The report highlighted that India "has not yet executed the industry-led productivity leap that China, Korea, and Vietnam delivered". It added that disruptions such as demonetisation, GST, and the NBFC crisis, along with pandemic, affected productivity.

Labour market rigidities and high logistics costs remain barriers, while reforms in transportation, land, and commodity management are vital for future growth. —*ANI*

2020s ARE A 'LOST DECADE' FOR ECONOMY: WORLD BANK

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

The World Bank has warned that the 2020s risk becoming a "lost decade" for many developing economies.

In its June 2026 Global Economic Prospects report, the bank said nearly one in two developing economies has failed since 2019 to narrow the income gap with the world's most prosperous economies.

By end-2026, it is projected, a quarter of developing economies, a third of low-income economies, and half of fragile and conflict-affected economies will be poorer than they were on the eve of the pandemic.

Per-capita income across emerging market and developing economies — excluding China and India — relative to advanced economies is not expected to return to pre-pandemic levels until after 2028, implying nearly a decade of lost income convergence.

The World Bank said opportunities remain to reverse the trend, pointing to artificial intelligence, clean energy investment, and growing regional trade integration as forces that could support stronger growth if countries prepare adequately. —*ANI*

US DOJ okays Paramount Skydance-Warner merger

WASHINGTON, 13 JUNE

US Justice Department (DOJ) has concluded that Paramount Skydance's proposed acquisition of Warner Bros. Discovery is unlikely to harm industry competition or consumers.

The agency stated that the deal "will be to increase competition across the media and entertainment ecosystem, with benefits for American consumers and workers." David Ellison's Paramount Skydance reached a deal to acquire Warner Bros.

Discovery in late February, after a rival bid by Netflix failed. The merger aims to boost growth and offer consumers more content by combining HBO Max and Paramount+ libraries. Critics warn of further industry consolidation, but regulators believe the merger will increase competition by providing a "robust competitive alternative" to existing streaming giants.

The regulators concluded the deal won't harm competition in Hollywood, citing extensive industry competition.

The merger's future remains uncertain amid ongoing investigations by California, Europe, and the UK. The deal is expected to close in Q3, with penalties if delayed past 30 September. —*PTI*

INDIA'S CREDIT RATING MAY FALL

Biodiversity loss can trigger debt crises: Experts

LONDON, 13 JUNE

Biodiversity loss would see India's credit rating falling 4 grades on a 20-point scale and incur an additional USD 49 billion a year in debt servicing costs, experts have warned in a new study.

The work for the study was carried out by a research team spanning the University of Sheffield, University of Sussex, Edinburgh Business School, and SOAS University of London, a release from the University of Sheffield said on Thursday.

Pointing out that biodiverse environments provide valuable economic contributions like insects pollinating crops and oceans underpinning the seafood value chain, what economists call "ecosystem services", the study said losing these services carries hefty costs.

–FREEPIK

Sovereign ratings assess the ability of countries to repay debt, affecting the price governments pay to borrow; it, in turn, affects taxpayers.

"This kind of biodiversity loss would see India's credit rating falling 4 grades, while China's would plummet by 5.5 on the 20-point scale. The implications for debt servicing costs are substantial with India having to pay an additional USD 49 billion a year and USD 70 billion for China," said the study.

While environmental degradation is seen as a serious financial risk, sovereign debt markets currently have no way of accounting for it, leaving USD 83 trillion of assets open to mispricing, it said.

The researchers warned that falling credit ratings and higher sovereign risk will see markets demand higher risk premia, meaning governments, and ultimately, taxpayers, pay more to borrow.

As many as 23 countries representing 5.5 billion invidiuals were captured in the study. —*PTI*

Delhi beer sales up by 10% in May

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE

Beer sales rose nearly 10 per cent in May compared to the same period last year, driven by the return of popular national brands on retail shelves, excise department officials said.

National beer brands accounted for 54 per cent of sales in May, up from 24 per cent in May 2025 and 38 per cent in 2024. Total sales rose from 10,10,524 cases in May last year to 11,12,761 cases this May, with national brands accounting for 5,96,351 cases against 2,47,143 in the corresponding period last year.

The share of other brands — including lesser-known labels and imports from Nepal and Bhutan fell to 46 per cent from 62 per cent in May 2024.

Draught beer sales remain concentrated in restaurants and clubs, with 1,521 cases sold in May — 1,365 by restaurants and 126 by clubs.

Officials said May and June mark peak beer consumption as rising temperatures drive demand for chilled drinks. —*PTI*

US open its home World Cup with dynamic 4-1 win

US beat Paraguay as Balogun scores 2 crucial goals

INGLEWOOD, 13 JUNE:

Folarin Balogun scored twice in the Americans' historic three-goal first half, and the US opened its first home World Cup in 32 years with its biggest win in the tournament, a dynamic 4-1 victory over Paraguay.

Christian Pulisic had an assist in a stellar first-half playmaking performance for the Americans, who enthralled their Southern California fans with an aggressive attack while streaking to a 3-0 halftime lead — the team's largest in any World Cup game.

Gio Reyna ripped another goal in the dying moments of second-half injury time, giving the Americans four goals in a World Cup match for the first time.

The US scored only three goals combined in its four matches at the Qatar World Cup four years ago, and it had never scored more than three in a World Cup match. But the Americans were a team transformed while playing in new coach Mauricio Pochettino's more creative system in front of a passionate, star-studded Los Angeles crowd of 70,492.

Mauricio scored in the second half for Paraguay, but La Albirroja fell too far behind early in their first World Cup match in 16 years.

After the US went ahead on an early own-goal created by Pulisic's playmaking, Balogun scored in the 31st minute and again in the fifth minute of first-half injury time.

The New York-born, London-raised striker made his World Cup debut with the first multi-goal performance from a US player in the tournament since 1930. Balogun chose to represent the US three years ago instead of staying in the English system, where he likely would have struggled to make the Three Lions' roster — and the 24-year-old Monaco professional has swiftly provided the top-level striker play historically lacking on US rosters.

Pulisic was replaced by Sebastian Berhalter at halftime, but the US didn't immediately indicate whether the AC Milan standout was injured. Pulisic appeared to signal to family in the stands that he was fine.

Dozens of American celebrities and cultural icons turned out for the match 10 miles south of Hollywood, including Tom Cruise, George Lucas, Bill Gates, Halle Berry, Leonardo DiCaprio and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. —*PTI*

US opened its first home World Cup hunt in 32 years with a dynamic 4-1 victory over Paraguay—*FIFA*

Portugal should focus on good start: Ronaldo

NEW YORK, 13 JUNE:

Portugal traveled to the United States with Cristiano Ronaldo saying the team needs to focus on getting off to a good start instead of thinking ahead about contending for its first World Cup title.

The Portuguese are among the favorites at the expanded 48-team tournament and the 41-year-old Ronaldo will be playing in his sixth World Cup, the most ever alongside rival Lionel Messi of Argentina.

"It is important to get off to a good start, do well in the first and second matches and then finish first in the group," Ronaldo told reporters in Portugal before the team's departure. "Then we go match by match, but not with the expectations of winning it all. It has to be step by step. A good start is the most important thing."

Portugal will play its opening Group K match against Congo on Wednesday in Houston. The team then faces Uzbekistan on June 23, again in Houston, and finishes the group stage against Colombia on June 27 in Miami. This is Portugal's ninth World Cup appearance. —*PTI*

Canada draws 1-1 with Bosnia-H'govina

Bosnia's Sead Kolasinac, left, vies for the ball with Canada's Buchanan during a World Cup Group B soccer match in Toronto on Friday—*PTI*

TORONTO, 13 JUNE

Canada earned its first World Cup point in seven matches on soccer's biggest stage, and coach Jesse Marsch noted the sea of red-clad, maple leaf-waving fans who continuously belted out chants of "Go Ca-na-da!" helped get it.

A slow start and an early deficit turned into a rousing celebration once late substitute Cyle Larin scored in the 78th minute for a 1-1 draw against Bosnia-Herzegovina on Friday in Canada's tournament debut on home soil.

Playing in the shadow of Toronto's iconic CN Tower, and with hockey star Connor McDavid and actors Ryan Reynolds and Mike Myers in the stands, Larin converted Promise David's pass a mere two minutes after entering the game.

"The crowd, I think, willed us into the game as (the players) could feel that energy in the second half tilting more and more," said Marsch, who took particular delight upon learning Myers, who portrayed international man of mystery Austin Powers in the movies, was on among those on hand.

It was an even better feeling for Larin, who normally starts but had to bide his time watching on the bench until late in the second half.

"It was amazing feeling, just to score a goal on home soil, where I'm from, and just to celebrate with the fans, amazing atmosphere," said Larin, who plays for second-division English club Southampton and is from Toronto's suburb of Brampton.

The goal was only the second in World Cup play scored by Canada after the team lost all three of its games at the 1986 World Cup in Mexico and again four years ago at the Qatar tournament. —*PTI*

AUSTRALIA EMBRACES IMMIGRANTS, SAYS SOCCER IS FOR ALL

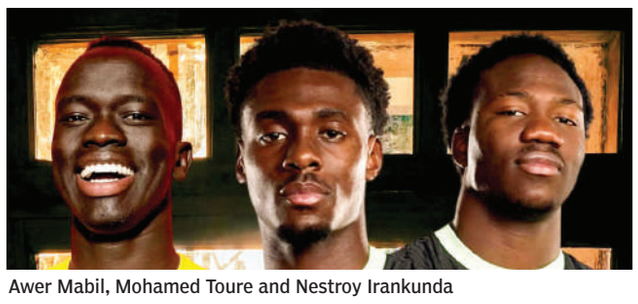
NEW YORK, 13 JUNE:

Ahead of Australia's opening World Cup match, the Socceroos are celebrating the immigrants on the squad.

The message is simple: Soccer is for everyone. But it comes at a time when anti-immigrant sentiment is on the rise in Australia and in many places around the world.

Among those featured in a video released by Professional Footballers Australia is Awer Mabil, who was born in a refugee camp in Kenya to South Sudanese parents.

"There's a lot of journeys behind the jersey, so to be a Socceroo has many different meanings, but with one purpose, and that is to do the country proud," Mabil said.



Awer Mabil, Mohamed Toure and Nestroy Irankunda

Mabil is one of three Socceroos who were born in refugee camps. Fellow forward Mohamed Touré was born in a camp in Guinea to Liberian parents before his family settled in Adelaide. And attacker Nestory Irankunda was born in a Tanzanian refugee camp after his parents fled Burundi. The family moved to Perth but later settled in Adelaide, where Irankunda and Touré became friends.

Both Touré, who plays for Norwich, and Irankunda, who plays for Watford, are making their World Cup debuts. Mabil plays in Spain for Castellón, and is making his second World Cup appearance.

Milos Degenek's family left Croatia when he was a baby and they lived as refugees in Serbia before moving to Sydney.

The Socceroos' message comes at a fraught time for immigrants around the world. A knife attack in Northern Ireland earlier this month set off two nights of fiery riots, stoked by anti-migrant rhetoric. The Socceroos have played in the last five World Cups and have advanced to the round of 16 twice, including in 2022. Australia opens Group D play on Saturday against Turkey in Vancouver, British Columbia. —*PTI*

CONGO ARRIVES IN STYLE

Democratic Republic of Congo football team arrive at the George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, Texas, ahead of their World Cup opener. Nicknamed Les Léopards, the squad turned heads in coordinated black outfits featuring leopard-print accents, paying tribute to the country's historic symbol of strength. Designed by Congolese label JMAKXPARIS, the ensemble marked DR Congo's return to the World Cup after 52 years —*SCREENGRAB*

Neymar to miss Brazil's opener against Morocco

NEW JERSEY, 13 JUNE:

Brazil star Neymar will miss the national team's opening match of the FIFA World Cup 2026 against Morocco, Brazil head coach Carlo Ancelotti confirmed on Saturday.

The Selecao get their tournament underway on 13 June, when they face Morocco at MetLife Stadium in the first Group C game.

Speaking about the forward's fitness, Ancelotti said, "He's working hard to get fit as quickly as possible. We hope he can return to full training next week."

Neymar was a doubt for their opener after suffering a calf injury in the lead-up to the tournament, and has now been ruled out for the match.

Brazil will next take on Haiti on 19 June before concluding their group-stage campaign against Scotland on 24 June, with Ancelotti expressing confidence that Neymar could be available for both fixtures.

Brazil and Morocco are set to face each other at the World Cup for only the second time, with their previous meeting coming in the 1998 group stage when Brazil registered a 3-0 victory in a match that saw Ronaldo Nazario and Rivaldo score their first World Cup goals.

Brazil have historically dominated against African teams at the World Cup, winning seven of their eight encounters, with their only defeat coming against Cameroon in 2022, when they lost 1-0.

The upcoming fixture is also the only group-stage match featuring two teams currently ranked inside the top 10 of the FIFA World Rankings, with Brazil placed sixth and Morocco eighth.

"This is a team which can compete with anyone," Ancelotti added. —*ANI*

Bhaker terms Rana's death irreparable loss

NEW DELHI, 13 JUNE:

Ace Indian shooter Manu Bhaker on Saturday described the death of her mentor Jaspal Rana as an "irreparable loss", as the country's shooting fraternity mourned the untimely demise of one of the sport's most revered icons. Rana, one of India's finest pistol shooters who successfully transitioned into coaching, guided Manu to her historic twin bronze medals at the 2024 Paris Olympics. He died at the age of 49 after battling cardiac complications. Rana was serving as the high-performance coach of the Indian pistol team at the time of his death. In a brief two-word post in Hindi on social media, Manu shared three photographs of herself with Jaspal and wrote, "Apurniya Kshati" (irreparable loss). Manu, who is currently in Dehradun attending the national camp, was also present when Rana's mortal remains were brought to the city. On Friday evening, she was seen sitting alongside his father, N.S. Rana, and other family members. —*PTI*

England crush SL as Wyatt-Hodge's 105 powers record total

BIRMINGHAM, 13 JUNE

England launched its home Women's Twenty20 World Cup in style by crushing Sri Lanka by 87 runs at Edgbaston.

After making the highest total in tournament history - 219-1- with 105 not out by opener Danni Wyatt-Hodge, England dismissed Sri Lanka for 132 on Friday. Left-arm pacer Freya Kemp took a career-best 4-21 including three wickets in one over that reduced Sri Lanka to 92-8.

But it was England's record-setting batting that shone on a sunny evening in front of 14,865 fans.

Wyatt-Hodge and Amy Jones, who was pushed up the order to open, combined for 100 inside 10 overs. Jones was dropped on 12 and 48 and was out for 53 off 38 balls. But her's and Wyatt-Hodge's stand of 135 was England's highest opening partnership in T20 World Cup history.

Captain Nat Sciver-Brunt, only just back from a torn calf in April, was dropped on 14.

England's Danni Wyatt-Hodge celebrates reaching her century during the ICC Women's T20 World Cup

But her unbeaten 46 off 22 balls shot her past Charlotte Edwards, the former captain and current England coach, to be England's highest run-scorer in T20 World Cups. Sciver-Brunt has 784 and Edwards 768.

Sciver-Brunt gave Wyatt-Hodge, on 97, the last two balls of the innings.

She immediately hit behind square to the boundary, reaching the seventh hundred in tournament history and the second by an Englishwoman till date. —*PTI*

BALANCED INDIA EYE STRONG OUTING FROM OPENERS

BIRMINGHAM, 13 JUNE

A well-balanced India will need openers Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma to fire from all cylinders against a tricky Pakistan to make a bright beginning to their campaign in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

Led by Harmanpreet Kaur, India are looking to add a second global title to their showcase after winning the 50-over version last year, and the head-to-head stats heavily favours them against cross-border rivals. India enjoy an overwhelming 13-3 lead in the shortest format, and, in fact, their previous meeting was in 2024 T20 World Cup in Dubai, which India won by six wickets.

From that day, India have grown into a more robust white ball unit, which is reflected in their ODI World Cup victory, and almost the same squad will lead India's quest for a T20 crown.

India have been in reasonable form too in the run-up to the event. —*PTI*

RAIN PLAYS SPOIL SPORT

The pitch was kept under covers as rain disrupted the ODI between India and Afghanistan at Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh on Saturday. Persistent showers forced the match to be reduced to 25 overs per side under overcast skies. After winning the toss, India captain Shubman Gill opted to field first—*PTI*

Sindhu loses semis in Australian Open

SYDNEY, 13 JUNE

Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu's wait for a BWF title continued as she bowed out in the semifinals of the Australian Badminton Open after a straight-game defeat to top seed Akane Yamaguchi of Japan, here on Saturday.

The former World No 1, who got a third seed here, put up a spirited fight in the opening game and even held a game point before going down 20-22, 12-21 to the world No. 3 Japanese in a 43-minute contest. With Sindhu's exit, India's campaign in the tournament also came to an end.

Sindhu matched Yamaguchi shot for shot in first game. Both players enjoyed runs of six consecutive points each, but the Indian failed to convert her game point as Yamaguchi held her nerve to take the opener.

The momentum shifted decisively in the second game.Yamaguchi raced with an eight-point burst to go 13-6 up and maintained control throughout to seal the match without fuss. —*PTI*